**University of Alberta**

# Conservative Tradition in Pre-Revolutionary France:
# Parisian Salon Women

by

Jolanta T. Pekacz ©

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History

Department of History and Classics

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and commented to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Conservative Tradition in Pre-Revolutionary France: Parisian Salon Women" submitted by Jolanta Teresa Pekacz in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in History.

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# Abstract

The establishment of the Parisian salon as a distinctive form of sociability in the mid-seventeenth century was a result of the convergence of three elements: the consolidation of the absolute monarchy after the *Fronde*, the shift in emphasis from traditional noble values to *honnêteté*, and the perception of the vital role of women in disseminating these values. Paradoxically, by accepting their role in sustaining *honnêteté*, women limited, rather than fostered, their own advancement in society. The very existence of a *salonnière* was founded upon the agreement that the only "public" role allowed for a woman was that of provider of propriety and good manners. The salon emerges as a niche in which society allowed her to function, on the assumption that she would not violate the *bienséance* considered appropriate for her sex; thus, as an institution deeply rooted in the *status quo.*

The emphasized attachment to *bienséances* (regardless of whether authentic or pretended) also shaped eighteenth-century Parisian salons. They were places accommodating women's social aspirations and intellectual curiosity *within* the *bienséances*, rather than breaking with them. And even playing precisely this limited role (or perhaps because of it) the salon became an object of severe criticism, as hampering the freedom of discourse. Salon women were accused of siding with conservative and reactionary forces in society.

The pro-establishment stance with which salon women were commonly associated was as much stereotypical as it was real, as shown by their consistent support of the pro-French party in the eighteenth-century quarrels over French the Italian opera—quarrels that

were never exclusively aesthetic, but involved social and political issues as well. The positions taken in the operatic quarrels by the salonnières on the one hand, and the philosophes on the other, were indicative of a deep chasm that had always existed between them and was as inevitable as were the consequences of the specific "division" of gender roles in society. While the philosophes took a pro-Italian stance, salonnières almost unanimously supported French opera, considered by the philosophes as aesthetically conservative and politically reactionary. In fact, the women's choice reflected traditional salon philosophy: aesthetic (adherence to classical values), moral (adherence to traditional moral values), political (adherence to establishment), and social (adherence to traditional social order).

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## Note on Quotations

All quotations from French sources are in French, unless English translations were available. The spelling and accentuation of French texts have been left in their premodern form.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

**INTRODUCTION** 1

**I. IDEAS OF *HONNETETE* IN PRE-REVOLUTIONARY FRANCE** 19

*Honnêteté* as an Ideal of Social Conduct 25
  *Art de plaire* 26
  *Bienséance* 30
  *Juste milieu* 34
  Conformity 36
The Moral Dimension of *Honnêteté* 48
*Honnêteté* as a Political Orientation 59
*Honnêteté* as an Aesthetic Norm 65
*Honnêteté* Implemented: Conversation 75
  Form 76
  Content 80

**II. THE FORMATIVE EFFECT OF *HONNETETE* ON PARISIAN SALONS** 86

The *Honnête* Woman Becomes a *Salonnière* 87
The *Salonnière* as an Ideal of Social Conduct 94
  The Marquise de Rambouillet 94
  The *Précieuses* 100
  Fear of *préciosité*: eighteenth-century salons 105
The *Salonnière* as a Social Conservative 114
The *Salonnière* as a Moral Conservative 125
The *Salonnière* as an Aesthetic Conservative 133
Salon Discourse 147

**III. THE CASE STUDY: SALON WOMEN AND THE QUARRELS OVER FRENCH AND ITALIAN OPERA** 167

The Status of the Opera under Louis XIV 169
The Beginning of the Controversy over French and Italian opera 175
*Lullists* contra *Ramists* 184
The *Querelle des Bouffons* 194
*Gluckists* contra *Piccinists* 208
The Crisis of the Authority of Judgement 219

**Conclusion** 236

**Bibliography** 241

# INTRODUCTION

Until recently Parisian salons was a neglected topic in historical research.[1] In the traditionally compartmentalized discipline of professional history, as established in the previous century, there was little room for a phenomenon situated on the frontiers of various thematic specialisms and with not much relevance to what constituted major themes in political and intellectual history. Moreover, the centrality of women in salon sociability (which was taken as a matter of course) set the style and determined the direction of writing on salons. This did not help to build the reputation of salons as a topic of serious research within traditional history. On the one hand, there were numerous publications of a popular character that kept appearing from the end of the nineteenth century, highlighting petty intrigues, love affairs, and various scandals as allegedly the major preoccupation of Parisian salon women.[2] On the other, there were less numerous studies whose authors tried to give a more balanced picture of salons by highlighting the positive role of salon women in implementing the rules of civility and good manners.[3] Despite differences, however, these two approaches belonged to the same category: neither had scholarly aspirations and both were meant to demonstrate the importance of women in eighteenth-century France measured by their ability to influence public life: either politics by intrigue or civility by spreading good manners.

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[1] Although I use *salon* and its derivative, *salonnière* (salon woman), throughout this study, *salon* began to be applied to social gatherings only in the nineteenth century. (According to Verena von der Heyden-Rynsch, the term *salon*, meaning social gathering for the purpose of conversation, appeared for the first time in 1807, in Mme de Staël's *Corinne*. See: *Salons européens. Les beaux moments d'une culture féminine disparue*, trans. from the German by Gilberte Lambrichs, Paris: Gallimard, 1993, p. 13.) In the seventeenth century what later came to be called *salon* was referred to as *ruelle*, *cabale*, *cabinet*, *réduit*, *alcôve*, *compagnie*, *société*, *cour littéraire*, *cercle*, *assemblée*, and *chambres*; in the eighteenth century as *souper*, *diner*, or *bureau d'esprit*.

[2] For example, S. G. Tallentyre, *Women of the Salons* (New York, London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1926) and Julia Kavanagh, *Women in France during the Eighteenth Century*, 2 vols. (New York, London: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1893).

[3] For example, Edmond et Jules Goncourt, *La femme au dix-huitième siècle* (Paris: Firmin Didot Frères, Fils et Cie, 1862); Paul Deschanel, *Figures des femmes* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1900).

By modern scholarly standards, the validity of such approaches is limited; they tell us more about the mentality of their times than about the role of salons in Old-Regime France. Their authors, too, were mainly responsible for the relegation of salons as a topic of historical research to *la petite histoire* and often to the domain of amateurs rather than professional historians.[4] The interest in salons as part of *la petite histoire* continued in the first decades of the twentieth century, with no substantial changes in approach.[5] Only some biographical works devoted to particular *salonnières* offered a more analytical approach.[6]

The enlargement in scope of historical inquiry in recent decades, the inclusion of women in the subject matter of academic history, and the reaction against the compartmentalization of the discipline have brought Parisian salons into the research agenda of professional historians.[7] For many of them, however, salons still belong to *la petite histoire* detached from the big themes in the discipline.[8] This polarization is related to another one which has influenced the general perception of the role of salons in pre-Revolutionary France during last two decades. While seventeenth-century Parisian salons are conventionally seen as places disseminating good manners and setting standards of civility, with women playing a central role in this process (the perception strongly shaped by recent research in literary studies[9]), the lack of sufficient research according to modern standards has led some historians of the French Enlightenment to the conclusion that Parisian salons of that time were closed coteries whose influence upon political, social and cultural spheres in eighteenth-century France was detrimental (due to various restrictions imposed by salon women upon their guests),[10] and others to believe that such influence was wholly insignificant.[11]

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[4] For example, Marquis de Ségur, *La Royaume de la rue Saint-Honoré: Mme Geoffrin et sa fille* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1897) and *Julie de Lespinasse* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1905); Comte d'Haussonville, *Le Salon de Mme Necker d'après des documents tirés des Archives de Coppet*, 2 vols. (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1882).

[5] For example, Thérèse L. Latour, *Princesses, Ladies and Salonnières of the Reign of Louis XV*, trans. from the French by Ivy E. Clegg (London: Kegan Paul, Trench Trubner & Co., Ltd., 1927); Carlos Fischer, *Les salons* (Paris: Marcel Seheur, 1929); Walerian Tornius, *Salons. Pictures of Society through Five Centuries*, trans. from the German by Agnes and Lilian Wonderley (New York: Cosmopolitan Books Corporation, 1929); Henriette Tasse, *Les salons français* (Montréal: [n.p.], 1930); Roger Picard, *Les salons littéraires et la société française 1610-1789* (New York: Brentano's, 1943); Marguerite Glotz and Madeleine Maire, *Salons du XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Hachette, 1945).

[6] For example, Nicola Ivanoff, *La Marquise de Sablé et son salon* (Paris: Les Presses Modernes, 1927).

[7] For example, Carolyn C. Lougee, *Le Paradis des Femmes. Women, Salons, and Social Stratification in Seventeenth-Century France* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976).

[8] For example, Serge Grand, *Ces bonnes femmes du XVIIIe siècle: flâneries à travers les salons littéraires* (Paris: Pierre Horay, 1985) and, more recently, Verena von der

The interest in Parisian salons entered a new stage after the publication of Jürgen Habermas' *Strukturwandel der Öffentlichkeit: Untersuchungen zu einer Kategorie der bürgerlichen Gesellschaft* (1962), particularly its French (1978) and English (1989) translations. In the key concept of Habermas's work, the emergence, function and evolution of the "public sphere" in the mid-eighteenth century, salons played a prominent role as centres of free, critical discussion, naturally opposed to the court and absolutism, and as places levelling the social distinctions instituted by birth and privilege.

Although Habermas himself did not provide sufficient historical evidence to support his contention, other scholars have attempted to do this. Habermas's theory, elevating salons to an important part of the "public sphere," became a particularly attractive point of departure for feminist scholars with a program to demonstrate the centrality of (salon) women in the "project of Enlightenment." As one of them made clear, ". . . if Habermas's framework is used properly, it can help to explain why

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Heyden-Rynsch, *Salons européens.*

[9] For example, Barbara Krajewska, *Mythes et decouvertes. Le salon littéraire de Madame de Rambouillet dans les lettres des contemporaines* (Paris-Seattle-Tübingen: Biblio 17. Papers on French Seventeenth Century Literature, 1990) and *Du coeur à l'esprit. Mademoiselle de Scudéry et ses samedis* (Paris: Éditions Kimé, 1993).

[10] For example, Daniel Mornet, "La vie mondaine, les salons," in Henri Bergmann, *La vie parisienne au XVIIIe siècle: Leçons faites à l'École des hautes études sociales* (Paris: F. Alcan, 1914); Alan Charles Kors, *D'Holbach Coterie. An Enlightenment in Paris* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976); Robert Darnton, "In Search of Enlightenment: Recent Attempts to Create a Social History of Ideas," *Journal of Modern History* 43 (1971), pp. 113-132.

[11] For example, Antoine Adam, *Le Mouvement philosophique dans la première moitié du XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: S.E.D.E.S., 1967); Richard Fargher, *Life and Letters in France.*

salonnières in particular played such a prominent role in the shaping of an authentic public sphere in the eighteenth century."[12] As a result, most publications on eighteenth-century Parisian salons that have appeared during the last decade followed suit and were not only informed by Habermas's work but were written with the explicit intention of supporting his thesis (that is, to demonstrate the important role of salons and women running them) rather than to verify it.[13] More often than not the procedure applied in these publications consists in making the facts fit into the Habermasian theoretical mould (and in the author's political program) and in generalizing *pars pro toto* by an exclusion of evidence that would invalidate the theory, that is, would demonstrate that eighteenth-century salons neither developed in opposition to the court nor did they necessarily support the project of Enlightenment.

Methodological objections apart, this approach can be "useful" only for those authors who assume the central role of eighteenth-century Parisian salons, are determined to "prove" it, and are ready to ignore the fact that such an assumption itself is as arbitrary as its opposite (which, typically, they want to refute), if not supported by sufficient evidence. What it guarantees is a replacement of one arbitrary view (resulting from insufficient research) by another, equally arbitrary (resulting from a specific feminist approach). Dena Goodman, for example, sees traditional (male) historians of the French Enlightenment through her own lenses, that is, as necessarily pursuing a program. While hers is feminist, theirs is anti-feminist and hence *deliberately* excludes salon women or shows their role as detrimental. There is no room for scholars without a program in Goodman's feminism. This makes it possible for her to throw historians as different as

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*The Eighteenth Century* (London: Nelson, 1970).

[12] Dena Goodman, "Public Sphere and Private Life: Toward a Synthesis of Current Historiographical Approaches to the Old Regime," *History and Theory* 31/1 (1992), p. 17.

[13] For example, Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters. A Cultural History of the French Enlightenment* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1994). Among the exceptions to this rule is Joan B. Landes who, although she takes Habermas's theory as a point of departure, sees the Parisian salon of the Old Regime as a "unique institution of the early modern period" rather than as a Habermasian institution of the public sphere. *Women and the Public Sphere in the Age of the French Revolution* (Ithaca and London:

Ernst Cassirer, Roger Chartier, Robert Darnton, Peter Gay, Alan Kors and Daniel Mornet into the same post-Rousseauian sack. Thus, where the traditional approach has downplayed the role of salons in the public life of eighteenth-century Paris, the new one attributes to them an importance they have never enjoyed among historians: salons are seen as centres of serious intellectual activity and the type of sociability they cultivated indispensable for the development of Enlightenment ideas.

Although it may sound like a paradox, in a number of ways these two opposite approaches to the role of salons are strikingly similar. Not only are they both based on assumptions that favour extreme interpretations, but neither goes beyond acknowledging the formal roles of salons, or rather salon women (such as imposing upon their guests certain forms of behaviour and conversation) and differ only in assigning to these roles opposite values: "civilizing" and positive *versus* "taming" and negative. Further, both views define the role of salons (and thus salon women) exclusively in relation to their male guests, mainly the *philosophes*, and thus imply that salons did not have any content of their own. Consequently, salon women are viewed as acting either as beneficial "midwives" of the Enlightenment ideas conceived by the philosophes or as their arbitrary censors.

For Habermas and most of his followers, salons came to prominence as the public sphere developed and were institutions specific to that sphere, not "contaminated" by any Old Regime politics. In reality, however, salons did not "emerge" in mid-eighteenth century France; they have a history dating back to the beginning of the previous century and the Enlightenment salons were a part of this history. Habermas gives no reasons for implying that the seventeenth-century Parisian salons developed in opposition to the court and absolutism but assumes that the eighteenth-century ones did (by being a part of the public sphere), therefore implying that there must have been a disruption in the development of salons that took place sometime around the mid-eighteenth century. As a result, nothing significant links Parisian salons after about 1750 with their predecessors; they are directed towards the present and the future, not the past.

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Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 23.

The fact that the form and content of sociability, epitomized by conversation as developed in the seventeenth-century salons, was taken over by the eighteenth-century Parisian salonnières as the focus of salon activity, is but one indicator of continuity rather than disruption in the development of Parisian salons before the Revolution. Daniel Gordon attempted recently to resolve this flaw in Habermas's theory by assuming that the egalitarian tradition of the Parisian salons was not only a mid-eighteenth-century phenomenon but extended back to the seventeenth century.[14] To demonstrate this, Daniel Gordon attempted to refute Norbert Elias's influential theory of the civilizing process according to which Parisian salons, with their emphasis on manners, derived from the court and therefore salons were essentially an extension of court culture.[15] Daniel Gordon argues, in contrast, that the conception of sociability in Old Regime France, which rested upon forms of politeness and was epitomized in polite/salon conversation, developed independently from and, in fact, in opposition to the court, and became "a mode of exchange . . . free of the ritualistic constraints of corporate hierarchy."[16] Such sociability allowed for an inherently egalitarian social intercourse and for a free and unhampered discourse. Salons, in this rendition, appear as areas of "transgression" within the hierarchical, absolutist monarchy.

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[14] Daniel Gordon, *Citizens without Sovereignty. Equality and Sociability in French Thought, 1670-1789* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994).

[15] Norbert Elias, *The Court Society*, trans. By Edmund Jephcott (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983). Elias's theory has among its followers such scholars as Roger Chartier, Erica Harth, Joan B. Landes, and Jacques Revel. Landes believes that "[a]lthough the salon shared many features with the emerging oppositional, bourgeois public sphere of the cities, on some points . . . the two were in conflict" and prefers to see the salon as "a rather unique institution of the early modern period." In fact, "an alternative sphere of cultural production inside absolutism." Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*, pp. 23 and 40. According to Roger Chartier, the salon was a reflection of a court culture: the art of containing oneself (*se contenir*), the art of concealing feelings (*dissimuler*), and theatralization were the principal rules of a man of the court. "Trajectoires et tensions culturelles de l'Ancien Régime, in: *Histoire de la France. Les formes de la culture*, ed. André Burguière (Paris: Seuil, 1993), pp. 307-392. As Erica Harth pointed out: "The state appropriated the informal academy, but not the salon," which proves that the salon was not perceived as an opposite to court or threatening the court. *Cartesian Women. Versions and Subversions of Rational Discourse in the Old Regime* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 61. See also Jacques Revel, "The Uses of Civility," in *A History of Private Life*, vol. III: *Passions of the Renaissance*, ed. by Roger Chartier, trans. from the French by Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1989).

[16] Gordon, *Citizens without Sovereignty*, p. 29.

Although Elias's conception of the civilizing process with reference to Parisian salons may not be entirely convincing, Daniel Gordon's argument to disprove it is not convincing either. He does not invalidate evidence with which Elias supported his theory, nor does he bring new evidence to support his own contentions. Instead, he argues merely on an arbitrary theoretical level in which suppositions deriving from his analysis of Elias's views on German *Kultur* and French *civilization* and biographical context count prominently. Thus, if Elias is wrong, he is not wrong for the reasons given by Gordon. But Gordon's attempt to refute Elias's conception of the civilizing process and to extend the egalitarian and anti-court tradition of Parisian salons back to the seventeenth century is ultimately unsuccessful because the theoretical model he proposes is insufficiently informed by social practice as it emerges from historical evidence.

To acknowledge fully both continuity and disruptions in the salon tradition would call for taking into consideration not only what made salons a part of the new "public sphere," but also what made them a part of the past; that is, to determine to what extent the eighteenth-century Parisian salons were still the extension of a court culture (in terms of their attachment to manners, as well as their political and social philosophy), like their seventeenth-century predecessors, and what (if anything) made them abandon their original loyalty. The assumption that the mid-eighteenth-century Parisian salons were substantially different from those of the *grand siècle*, as is the case in Habermas's theory, implies not only that they did abandon their traditional content (that is, their pro-establishment stance) and saved only their form (the rules of behaviour), but also that that old form was now serving a new cause (the promotion of Enlightenment ideals directed against the establishment). Since Habermas's major preoccupation was with the construction of a general theory rather than with its particular variables, the historians using his theory to demonstrate the central role of salons and salon women in the creation of a public sphere should not take his assumption as unquestionable.[17]

From the assumption that eighteenth-century Parisian salons were a vital part of the Habermasian "public sphere" follows that most serious discussions of the Enlightenment dealing with topics of public concern were taking place in the salons and that salon women identified themselves with and supported the views of their male guests. However, more research into the topics of salon conversations and into the views of the salonnières has to be done to prove such a thesis. And it is rather difficult to do that by focusing exclusively on the formal aspects of salon conversation, as is the case with post-Habermasian writing on Enlightenment salons in Paris.

Habermas and other authors who emphasize the apparent freedom of discussion in salons do not take into consideration that salons never allowed free conversation, neither in terms of form nor content, but rather conversation that appeared to be free (or "natural" as it was put by contemporary authors), and that "politeness," referring to formal aspects, was not the only characteristic of a salon conversation. More often than not, treatises on conversation published in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century France explicitly excluded any topics critical to the *status quo*, particularly political and religious topics, not as a matter of politeness (for example, because such topics might not be of general interest), but because they were considered irreconcilable with the set of values and loyalties characterizing an *honnête* person. Circumspection treating topics of conversation resulted from deference, not from indifference.[18] There are therefore not sufficient grounds to claim that Parisian salons had an inherently anti-court character in any moral or political sense. While, indeed, some moralist authors attacked the French court for its laxity of morals and promoted instead allegedly intrigue-free modes of socializing outside the court, they never questioned the monarchy or its politics. Moreover, the alleged moral "superiority" of forms of sociability outside the court was much exaggerated, as I discuss in Chapter I.

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[17] Dena Goodman apparently believes that the salons of Mme Geoffrin, Mlle de Lespinasse and Mme Necker simply "emerged" as serious *bureaux* where the project of Enlightenment was carried on, thus breaking with the tradition of salons as "aristocratic leisure institutions." Goodman, *The Republic of Letters*, p. 53. No support is offered, however, to prove that such salons as those of Mlle de Scudéry or the Marquise de Lambert or even Mme du Deffand were merely "aristocratic leisure institutions." The opposite conclusion emerges, for example, from Erica Harth's, *Cartesian Women*.

[18] I discuss the pro-monarchical content of seventeenth- and eighteenth-century treatises on *honnêteté* in my article on "Political Correctness for Polite Society: Pro-Monarchical Ideals of *Honnêteté* in Pre-Revolutionary France," *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Western Society for French History*, vol. 25, ed. Barry Rothaus, forthcoming, 1998.

Whether "politeness" as promoted in salons was beneficial to their guests or not is another debatable issue.[19] Dena Goodman asserts that the formal restrictions imposed by salonnières were beneficial, in fact, indispensable, for Enlightenment discourse, but does not really prove it. Despite the length and sophistication of her argument, she still does not answer relevant questions posed by the (male) scholars before her: if salons run by women were indeed indispensable, why is it that the most prolific intellectuals of the time, such as Diderot, could and did manage without them? If salons were indispensable only for certain types of literary mediocrity, such as Marmontel, Morellet, and Suard, the discussion needs to be moved to a more psychological plane. More importantly, if women's governance was indeed so beneficial for the philosophes, why did they decide to carry on the project of Enlightenment without women and start a variety of all-male gatherings from the end of the 1770s? It is difficult to explain the disruption between salon women and their male guests and the formation of purely male centres of sociability if one assumes that the restrictions imposed by salons played an indisputably positive role.

The advocates of the apparent freedom of discourse in salons downplay numerous critical opinions of the restrictions imposed by salon hostesses (regarding both formal rules of conversing and topics of conversations) that can be found both in seventeenth-

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[19] Among eighteenth-century authors addressing potentially debilitating effects of politeness were: François-Vincent Toussaint, *Les Moeurs* (1748): Charles Pinot Duclos, *Considérations sur les moeurs* (1750); and d'Alembert, *Essai sur la société des gens de lettres avec les grands* (1759). On this subject, see, for example, Peter France, *Rhetoric and Truth in France: Descartes to Diderot* (Oxford University Press, 1972), Chapter 3, and *Politeness and Its Discontents: Problems in French Classical Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1992), p. 68.

and eighteenth-century sources. Not only "unsociable" types, such as Rousseau, expressed such opinions but also *salonnards*, such as d'Alembert, Marmontel, and Morellet. Dena Goodman states that the criticism of feminine governance resulted from its perception as a violation of "natural" gender relations and was an expression of men's "dream of an idyllic world of male companionship."[20] If, indeed, women's governance was so "unnatural," why did men tolerate it and attend salons for well over a hundred years? Daniel Gordon, in *Citizens without Sovereignty*, does not mention contemporary criticism of the arbitrary ways in which eighteenth-century salonnières "governed" their meeting, and quotes only eulogies. But taking eulogies as a proof that salonnières were admired by their contemporaries is a methodological tautology, as no one is supposed to be blamed in a eulogy. The very idea of salon was to *restrict* and to *control* (conversation, behaviour, etc.), rather than to let it flow freely, and the nature of this restriction should not be reduced to "polite manners" allegedly always "transparent" and facilitating constructive communication. In reality, Old Regime sociability was a source of tensions and criticism launched from various angles. There is no conceptual room for this other side of politeness in Daniel Gordon's model; his is politeness *without* its discontents (to use Peter France's phrase).

The question of salons egalitarianism, too, should not be taken for granted. If salons were as democratic and egalitarian as their advocates claim, why were they criticized by their contemporaries precisely for their lack of egalitarianism? Because birth and privilege did not apparently count in the composition of guests in eighteenth-century salons, it does not mean that they were not exclusive in some other way.[21] And if salons were exclusive, the nature and consequences of this exclusiveness need to be established. It may very well be that the basis for the salons' exclusiveness was as oppressive in practice as the exclusiveness resulting from birth and privilege. The exclusiveness of salons, regardless of its type, makes it legitimate to view them as contributing to the consolidation of the existing elite by introducing new members into its folds[22] or creating some elite. Robert Darnton's distinction between separate groups of writers belonging to the "high" and the "low Enlightenment,"[23] projected against the composition of the salon guests as we know it, does not confirm the salons' egalitarian and democratic character but rather their perpetuation of an "official" literary and intellectual elite.

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[20] *The Republic of Letters*, pp. 106ff.

[21] In fact, as noticed by Joan B. Landes, ". . . even the participation in the oppositional public sphere was predicated on one's having a certain position in the property order." Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*, p. 43.

The apparent centrality of women in eighteenth-century Parisian salons is a debatable issue, too. While Natalie Zemon Davis argues that "avenues for women's freedom were foreclosed rather than expanded with the rise of the modern nation state,"[24] and Joan B. Landes proposes that "the exclusion of women from the bourgeois public was not incidental but central to its incarnation,"[25] Dena Goodman rejects the traditional thesis about the central role of men in the French Enlightenment and replaces it with one assuming the centrality of women, on the basis of her analysis of the three salonnières: Mme Geoffrin, Mlle de Lespinasse and Mme Necker. Goodman emphasizes that, as opposed to what their critics claim, these salonnières were not trivial and superficial but "very serious" about their roles in hosting guests, and due to their masterful governance they "saved the philosophes from themselves," that is, from disruptive quarrels within the Republic of Letters. But these arguments given for the centrality of women may equally lead to the opposite conclusion: the salons were centred around men and the salonnières built their reputation by inviting men almost exclusively. Moreover, if the desire for learning, and not vanity, was a primary goal for the three salonnières (as Goodman asserts), they learned from their male guests, and precisely what these guests wanted them to learn. The very "seriousness" of the salonnières in hosting male meetings demonstrated their affirmation of men's roles and men's importance, as exemplified by Mlle de Lespinasse's letters. Thus, in emphasizing the salonnières' "seriousness,"

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[22] *Ibid.*, p. 24.

[23] Robert Darnton, *The Literary Underground of the Old Regime* (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1982), Chapter I.

[24] Natalie Zemon Davis, "City Women and Religious Change," in *Society and Culture in Early Modern France* (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 1975), pp. 65-69.

[25] Landes, *Women and the Public Sphere*, p. 7.

Goodman may be confirming the very thesis she wants to refute: the importance, if not centrality, of men in the project of Enlightenment.[26]

In sum, the discussion on Parisian salons based on Habermasian premises has been at times more confusing than enlightening and has raised more questions than it has answered.

Without referring specifically to Habermas's theory of the "public sphere," Erica Harth takes up the discussion that contributes to the assessment of the role of salon women in pre-Revolutionary France. Examining places where seventeenth-century intellectual discussions took place (academies, *conférences* and salons) she advances the thesis that

> The salon, by the very conditions of its existence, slated women for a subordinate, and finally a negligible, role in discursive development. Inescapably tied to the history of the official academies, the salon as a center of intellectual life was soon overshadowed by its masculine counterpart. And whereas men frequented both the salon and the academy, women were confined to the salon.[27]

While feminist scholarship to date has been busy presenting salons (usually eighteenth-century ones) as feminocentric institutions in which women were able to realize fully their intellectual and social aspirations, Harth's research from the seventeenth-century perspective leads her to the conclusion that the salon, after having lost a gendered competition for intellectual space with the academy by the 1680s, "proved a discursive dead end for women." By the late eighteenth century the feminocentric salon was on the decline.[28] To explain why it happened, Harth argues that

> In the salon, the norms of gender prevented women from creating a similar space [to that of the academy]. The demands of feminine modesty and the inaccessibility of the educational apparatus necessary for the formation of

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[26] Paradoxically, in striving to elevate the salonnières, Goodman at times puts them down. For example, she blames Sainte-Beuve for seeing Mlle de Lespinasse's greatness in her love letters rather than in her work as a salonnière. (Goodman, *The Republic of Letters*, p. 73). In fact, Sainte-Beuve rightly appreciated Lespinasse's real self in an unhampered, creative activity, rather than in acting as midwife to the creative activity of others, at the cost of self-denial.

[27] Harth, *Cartesian Women*, p. 5.

[28] *Ibid.*, pp. 149-150.

> academicians . . . kept even the most educated women well within the limits of orthodoxy. Indeed, whatever intellectual development they underwent was contingent on remaining within these limits. Madeleine de Scudéry would have lost her salon and her reputation as a writer had she exceeded them.[29]

As a result,

> Excluded from the more powerful dissent of the academy and harboring possibly more subversive ideals of their own, women had little opportunity of contributing to the large historical movement of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries by which a discourse of dissent rose to dominance."[30]

Seen from the perspective proposed by Erica Harth, the eighteenth-century Parisian salonnières studied by Dena Goodman, by merely "supervising" (male) conversations were implicitly excluded from participation in the Enlightenment discourse on their own, and were only allowed to play second fiddle. In the eyes of the men attending the salons it was not a result of the salonnières' choice (as Goodman seems to imply), but a pre-determined necessity, as women were not seen as able to do any intellectual job on their own. It was thus the salon men who determined the formal roles played by salon women. The three salonnières analyzed by Goodman took it as a matter of course and simply complied with it. This very compliance Goodman sees as women's contribution to the "project of Enlightenment." She excludes from her discussion those women of the time who attempted to make a contribution by their own intellectual activity, independent from men; in other words, those women who refused to play second fiddle. Mme de Genlis, for example, very far from breaking with the established societal norms for a woman, yet harshly treated both by her male contemporaries and some salonnières precisely because of her literary attempts, would not fare much better in the hands of present-day feminists.

Almost from the very beginning, salons took a different course from that of the academy with the purpose of accommodating women's social and intellectual aspirations within the rules of feminine *bienséance*. While Harth's Cartesian women strove to accommodate their pursuit of knowledge (a traditionally male domain) and feminine bienséance, eighteenth-century salonnières largely abandoned independent intellectual aspirations in favour of formal, if not merely decorative roles; in fact, in favour of the preservation of a gendered system in which modest, unassuming women inhabit their separate sphere.[31] Rather than stretching the limits of traditional feminine bienséance, the salonnières focused upon its cultivation and perpetuation.

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[29] *Ibid.*, p. 62

One could argue further that while the seventeenth-century women were excluded from pursuing their intellectual interests and the salon was for them the only opportunity to learn, in the course of the eighteenth century the access of women to knowledge was less restricted and the danger of losing reputation was also diminished. The salon was not the only avenue of pursuing learning for women, as Mme du Châtelet demonstrated. However, most eighteenth-century Parisian women preferred salons to following in the footsteps of Mme du Châtelet. This undermines the thesis that the eighteenth-century salons were primarily places for feminine education.[32] Thus, it was not the seventeenth-century salon women, who did what they could within the confines of feminine bienséance to advance their pursuit of knowledge, but the eighteenth-century salonnières who were the real losers because they rejected knowledge when it was becoming available. Moreover, the self-censorship (both as to the form and to the content of the conversations) of eighteenth-century Parisian salon women also demonstrates that even if salonnières wished to learn, they did not wish to do so at the cost of bienséances considered appropriate for their sex.

The salon emerges then as a specifically feminine space, as opposed to feminocentric; not a sphere which a salonnière designed for herself to fulfill her social and intellectual aspirations and free herself from male tutelage, but rather a niche in

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[30] *Ibid.*, p. 63.

[31] For example, Mme de Genlis argued that a woman writer can both gain due recognition and yet practice her craft from within the confines of domesticity, with the reticence appropriate to her sex. Mme de Genlis, *De l'influence des femmes sur la littérature française* (Paris:Maradin, 1811), "Réflexions préliminaires sur les femmes."

[32] As Dena Goodman claims: ". . . the initial and primary purpose of Enlightenment salons was to satisfy the self-determined educational needs of the women who started

which society allowed her to function on the assumption that she would not violate the bienséance considered appropriate for her sex by illegitimate claims. Such claims were immediately spotted by men and women alike and exposed a claimant to public ridicule. The very existence of a salonnière was founded upon the agreement that the only "public" role allowed for a woman (that is, the role outside the strict sphere of domesticity), was that of the provider of propriety and good manners. From this perspective, the salon can be seen as an institution deeply rooted in the *status quo* and, paradoxically, interested in maintaining it.

This conservative orientation of salon women in pre-Revolutionary France, exemplified by Parisian salonnières, is the topic of this study. It proposes to view eighteenth-century salons as an outgrowth of the form of sociability initiated by the Marquise de Rambouillet in the 1610s with a specific program in mind and continued by a succession of salon women who did not depart from this program as far as some present-day scholars believe. It seems that the current discussion about the role of salons and salon women in pre-Revolutionary France may benefit from applying such a longer perspective and from studying the salon as an historically located phenomenon that was developing according to its own logic and was characterized not only by its specific form, but also by its content (political, social, moral, and aesthetic), inseparable from each other. This means that the "politeness" with which the Parisian salons have usually been associated served an end, rather than being an end in itself, and that salons represented a distinctive set of values that can be analyzed in social, moral, political, and aesthetic terms. Only when both aspects, the form and the content, are taken into consideration can the role of Parisian salons in pre-Revolutionary France be properly demonstrated.

The Parisian salon was an outgrowth of *honnêteté*, usually defined as the ideal of social conduct and identified with seventeenth-century France. In fact, I argue, honnêteté was more than just a seventeenth-century norm of social conduct; it became an incarnation of the cultural, political and social characteristics of the French Old Regime

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them." *The Republic of Letters*, p. 76.

and kept its vitality throughout the eighteenth century, if not well after that.[33] Honnêteté cut, to an extent, across traditional formal distinctions of social hierarchy and generated an "equality" based on a common consent in the observance of rules (social, moral, political, aesthetic). Paradoxically, it did not pose a threat to the inequality on which the old regime was grounded, but reinforced it. To paraphrase a present-day author, honnêteté offered a guarantee of the traditional order of things where people knew their place and the place of others. Social distances, refracted through the medium of a shared way of speaking, writing, thinking and behaving, resolved themselves into satisfying proximities: a duke and a commoner, despite an immense social and legal distance separating them, could meet on the common ground of honnêteté, without disturbing that distance.[34] Honnêteté was a celebration of the *status quo* against the forces of disorder.

The logic of salons' development, and both their form and content, is inseparable from that of honnêteté. And as honnêteté can not be limited to the rules of social conduct, salons, too, should not be viewed merely as places where formal restrictions were imposed upon those who attended them.

The inseparability of honnêteté and Parisian salons in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries is the point of this study. I argue that both the form of the salons and the views of the women running them were, in fact, based on the rules of honnêteté. Consequently, eighteenth-century salons continued, rather than broke, the tradition of their seventeenth-century predecessors. This is not to state merely that the ideals of honnêteté survived the seventeenth century and kept shaping various aspects of French life in the next century. Rather, it is to emphasize the central role of salons and their hostesses in this process. I also argue that honnêteté as practiced by eighteenth-century salon women made their salons isolated from, rather than compatible with, contemporary political, social and artistic developments, and was the source of the tensions and finally the disruption between salon women and the philosophes that took place towards the end of the century. The salonnières were trapped by their self-imposed, contradictory goals: on the one hand to remain true to themselves, that is to the rules of honnêteté (in the name of preserving political and social order, as well as moral and aesthetic norms), and on the other to promote the ideals of the Republic of Letters as these moved further and further away from those of honnêteté.

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[33] See, for example, C. J. Burckhardt, "Der Honnête homme. Das Eliteprogramm im 17. Jahrhundert" (1940), in C. J. Burckhardt, *Gestalten und Mächte*, new ed. (Zürich: Manesse, 1961), pp. 229-370; Henning Scheffers, *Höfische Konvention und die Aufklärung. Wandlungen des Honnête-homme-Ideals im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1980); Rolf Reichardt, "Wandlungen des Honnêteté-Ideals vom Absolutismus zur Französischen Revolution. Zwischenbilanz der Forschung aus sozialhistorischer Sicht," *Romanistische Zeitschrift für Literaturgeschichte* 11 (1987), pp. 174-192; and "Der *Honnête Homme* zwischen höfischer und bürgerlicher Gesellschaft. Seriell-begriffsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen von *Honnêteté*-Traktaten des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts," *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 69/2 (1987), pp. 341-370.

[34] Albert Jordan, "*Le langage des honnestes gens*: An Enquiry into Language and Elite Culture in 17th-century France," *History of European Ideas* 11 (1989), p. 443-444.

Such a perspective involves a focus on salon women and their views as well as on the views represented by their guests. It also assumes that salonnières, although too often depicted as preoccupied exclusively with "governing" their meetings according to some "rules of politeness," represented coherent views (whether publicly expressed or not) which can be defined in political, social, moral and aesthetic terms.

A specific case study I choose to discuss in this work is the standpoint taken by Parisian salon women on the one hand, and the philosophes on the other, in the eighteenth-century quarrels over the French and the Italian opera—quarrels that were never exclusively aesthetic but involved political and social issues of the century as well. Italian and French operatic genres became abstract ideological points of reference and the quarrels are to be read as a code; they have to be decoded and referred back to these more important and compelling underlying issues. In fact, the quarrels over the French and the Italian opera revealed a rift between the salonnières and the philosophes that began well before the 1780s, and epitomized the increasing incompatibility of the views of these two groups. Where the philosophes took a pro-Italian stance, the salon women almost unanimously supported the French opera, considered by the philosophes as aesthetically conservative and politically reactionary. In reality, the women's choice reflected traditional salon philosophy: aesthetic (adherence to classical values), moral (adherence to traditional moral values), political (adherence to the establishment) and social (adherence to the traditional social order). This philosophy, I argue, was an extension of the rules of honnêteté over aesthetic, moral, social, and political spheres.

The discussion on the position taken by Parisian salon women and the philosophes in the quarrels over the French and the Italian opera (Chapter III) is preceded by an analysis of honnêteté as a paradigm relating social, moral, political, and aesthetic characteristics inherent in the Old Regime (Chapter I). After this theoretical analysis there follows the presentation of the social practice of honnêteté: a discussion of the formative effect of the ideals of honnêteté on Parisian salons throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Chapter II).

# CHAPTER I

# IDEAS OF *HONNETETE* IN SEVENTEENTH- AND EIGHTEENTH-CENTURY FRANCE

> Je ne comprens rien sous le Ciel au dessus de l'honnêteté; c'est la quintessence de toutes les vertus . . .
>
> The Chevalier de Méré, *De la vraie honnêteté* (c. 1670.

Seventeenth-century French ideas of *honnêteté* derived, on the one hand, from ancient Greece and Rome and Renaissance Italy, and on the other, from Christian tradition inspired by the Church Fathers, especially Saint Jerome, and by Saint François de Sales.[1] The two traditions have sometimes been seen as conflicting, at least from the perspective of criticism of *mondaine* honnêteté from a religious standpoint that occurred in France in the last two decades of the seventeenth century. In fact, the secular and the religious traditions developed side by side, overlapping at times, and they contributed to complementary, rather than opposite conceptions of honnêteté. While the humanist tradition was a base for the conceptions of an *honnête homme*, the Christian one provided arguments for the conceptions of an *honnête femme*.

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[1] For the semantic content of *honnêteté* from 1538 to the end of the seventeenth century, as reflected in French dictionaries of that time, see Colette Demaizire, "'Honneste' et ses derives dans les dictionnaires français, de Robert Estienne à la fin du XVIIe siècle," in *La catégorie de l'honneste dans la culture du XVIIe siècle*, Actes du Colloque International de Sommiers II, Septembre 1983 (Institut de la Renaissance et de l'Age Classique, Université de Saint-Etienne, 1985), pp. 9-18. For the period 1600-1660 see Maurice Magendie, *La Politesse mondaine et les théories de l'honnêteté en France au XVIIe siècle, de 1600 à 1660*, 2 vols. (Paris: Alcan, 1925), II, pp. 467-473. For the link between honnêteté and the ancient *paideia*, see Emmanuel Bury, *Littérature et politesse. L'invention de l'honnête homme (1580-1750)* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1996). A *Begriffsgeschichte* of honnêteté from the sixteenth century till 1799 is included in *Handbuch politisch-sozialer Grundbegriffe in Frankreich 1680-1820*, Heft 7, ed. by Anette Höffer and Rolf Reichardt (München: R. Oldenbourg, 1986), pp. 3-67.

As an ideal of conduct for a courtier, honnêteté was modelled primarily after Baldassarre Castiglione's *Libro del Cortegiano* (first published in 1528 and translated into French in 1537) and best outlined by Nicolas Faret in his *L'Honnête Homme ou l'art de plaire à la cour* (1630).[2] As opposed to Castiglione's, however, Faret's honnête homme was not a libertine aristocrat but a roturier and social climber, an *homme habile*, whose career depended solely on his ability to gain the favours of the sovereign, and Faret's *L'Honnête homme* was a set of practical rules on how to achieve this end.

Despite numerous reeditions,[3] in the second half of the seventeenth century Faret's manual lost much of its *raison d'être* for polite society located outside the court and so did his pragmatically oriented conception of honnêteté. The ideal of honnêteté of a person of leisure (a noble or living like a noble), whose existence did not depend exclusively on the king's favours and on social climbing, found its most comprehensive theoretician in Antoine Gombaud, Chevalier de Méré (1607-1684), a habitué of Parisian salons.[4] Rather than a set of practical rules, honnêteté was for Méré an art of life and an art of sociability; rather than a pragmatic means, honnêteté was a purpose in itself. This is not to say, however, that the precepts for an honnête courtier, such as the art of simulation, disappeared completely from the repertoire of an honnête person outside the court, as demonstrated by the social practice of polite society in pre-Revolutionary France.[5] Similarly, Méré's renouncement of court life should be seen from a biographical perspective: his works on honnêteté were written after his unsuccessful attempts to make a career at the court. Disappointed and embittered, he withdrew from public life to engage in literary activity.

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[2] Other French authors inspired by Castiglione's work include: Antoine de Nervèze, *Le Guide des courtisans* (1606); Eustache Du Refuge, *Traité de la Cour, ou Instruction des Courtisans* (1616); and Pierre Bardin, *Le Lycée du sieur Bardin, ou en plusieurs promenades il est traité des connaissances, des actions et des plaisirs d'un honneste homme* (1632-34). For the criticism of *Il Cortegiano* in sixteenth-century France, see C. A. Mayer, "L'honnête homme. Molière and Philibert de Vienne's *Philosophe de court*," *Modern Language Review* 48 (1951), pp. 196-217.

[3] Between 1630 and 1681 Faret's *L'Honnête homme* reached at least twelve editions. See: Maurice Magendie's introduction to the 1930 reprint.

[4] Méré frequented the salons of the Marquise de Rambouillet, the Marquise de Sablé and the Comtesse de Maure; probably also of Mme de La Fayette and Mme de Sévigné. See: Charles-H. Boudhors, introduction to the Chevalier de Méré, *Oeuvres*, 3 vols. (Paris: Éditions Fernand Roches, 1930), I, p. xxvi. Méré's *Conversations* (1668), *Discours* (1677), and *Lettres* (edited in 1682) refer primarily to the 1640s and 1650s.

[5] Consequently, it indicates the compatibility rather than disruption between salon and the court.

Méré's *De le vraie Honnêteté*, published posthumously in 1700, was preceded by over twenty treatises on honnêteté that appeared in France after Faret's work (some of them several times), and followed by several others published and reprinted before the French Revolution.[6] One of the most successful was the *Traité du vrai mérite de l'homme considéré dans tous les âges dans toutes les conditions* by Charles-François Nicolas Le Maitre de Claville, which reached about twenty editions between 1734 and 1777 and was translated into Italian in 1757. In fact, works dealing with various aspects of honnêteté that appeared in France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries were much more numerous than moralistic treatises and included memoires, letters and various literary genres.

Such an abundant literature indicates the significance of the ideals of honnêteté for Old Regime French society and undermines the thesis that honnêteté was an exclusively seventeenth-century phenomenon which lost its importance in the age of Enlightenment.[7] In fact, many of the ideals of honnêteté survived the Grand Siècle and continued to influence modes of social behaviour well into the next century.[8]

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[6] See, for example, the list of works related to *honnêteté* in Magendie, *La politesse mondaine*, I, pp. ix-xxxvi; Raymond Toynet, "Les écrivains moralistes au XVIIe siècle," *Revue d'histoire littéraire de la France* 23 (1916), pp. 570-610; 24 (1917), pp. 296-306, 656-675; 25 (1918), pp. 310-320, 655-671; 33 (1926), pp. 398-407; and Rolf Reichardt, "Der *Honnête Homme* zwischen höfischer und bürgerlicher Gesellschaft. Seriell-begriffsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen von *Honnêteté*-Traktaten des 17. und 18. Jahrhunderts," *Archiv für Kulturgeschichte* 69/2 (1987), pp. 346-348. Reichardt's list of 29 works represents only treatises explicitly on *honnêteté*, published between 1630 and 1806.

[7] Advanced, for example, by Paul Hazard, *La crise de la conscience europeénne, 1680-1715* (Paris: Gallimard, 1968), Chapter VII: "Vers un nouveau modèle d'humanité."

[8] Such a view is represented, for example, by Corrado Rosso, for whom in the eighteenth century honnêteté became "un idéal mixte, mobilisant nécessairement un ensemble de valeurs. On fait appel non seulement à des qualités de valeur, mais aussi à une heureuse coordination et à une parfaite synergie qui sont elles aussi une valeur." "Le Maitre de Claville et le débat sur l'honnête homme au XVIIIe siècle," in *Französische Literatur im Zeitalter der Aufklärung. Gedächtnisschrift für Fritz Schalk.* Edited by Wido Hempel (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1983), p. 296. See also "Honnête homme, honnêteté, honnêtes gens," in *Handbuch politisch-sozialer Grundbegriffe in*

It is not my intention to analyze the semantic content of the notion of honnêteté throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries in order to establish patterns of change corresponding to the changes within French society of the Old Regime: centralization of social life at the royal court (honnête person as a courtier); development of mondaine life outside the court (honnête person as a leisured aristocrat); and a "bourgeoisation" of social life (honnête person as a bourgeois). In fact, it would be difficult to prove the existence of such patterns. A chronological overview of the editions of publications dealing with honnêteté indicates the coexistence of different conceptions of honnêteté, rather than a chronological sequence. Indeed, treatises advocating a religiously motivated ethic for an honnête person (often interpreted by scholars as evidence of the "bourgeoisation" of honnêteté[9]) appearing towards the end of the seventeenth century and throughout the eighteenth century were probably a reaction of French moralists to the excesses of mondaine life, but it is also true that a religiously motivated model of the honnête person existed much earlier and had nothing to do with the bourgeoisie.[10]

Similarly, a courtier was a model of the honnête person not only for authors such as Nicolas Faret in the first decades of the seventeenth century, but also over fifty years later, for

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*Frankreich 1680-1820*; Rolf Reichardt, "Der *Honnête Homme* zwischen höfischer und bürgerlicher Gesellschaft"; and his "Wandlungen des *Honnêteté*-Ideals vom Absolutismus zur Französischen Revolution: Zwischenbilanz der Forschung aus sozialhistorischer Sicht," *Romanistische Zeitschrift für Literaturgeschichte. Cahiers d'Histoire des Littératures Romanes* 1/2 (1987), pp. 174-192; and Norbert Elias, *The Civilizing Process. The History of Manners*, trans. by Edmund Jephcott (New York: Urizen Books, 1978), p. 7. The impact of ideals inherent in honnêteté upon post-Revolutionary French society, especially under the Restoration, still awaits research. See Domna C. Stanton, *The Aristocrat as Art. A Study of the 'Honnête homme' and the 'Dandy' in Seventeenth- and Nineteenth-Century French Literature* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980).

[9] For example, André Lévêque, "'L'honnête homme' et 'homme de bien au XVIIe siècle," *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 72 (1957), p. 620; Henning Scheffers, *Höfische Konventionen und die Aufklärung. Wandlungen des 'honnête-homme'-Ideals im 17. und 18. Jahrhundert* (Bonn: Bouvier Verlag Herbert Grundmann, 1980); Magendie, *La politesse mondaine*.

[10] For example, François de Sales, *Introduction à la vie dévote* (1608). Moral exigencies for an honnête femme were typically motivated by religious premises; see, for example, Jacques Du Bosc, *L'honneste femme* (1632); François de Grenaille, *L'Honneste fille* (1632-1634), *L'Honneste veuve* (1640), *L'Honneste garçon* (1642).

writers such as Armand de Gérard[11] and Joachim Trotti de La Chétardie.[12] As argued by a present-day author, in practice, the conception of an *homme habile* implementing court techniques to achieve an end, machiavellian in provenance, enters the society as a whole and becomes a model for the *homme habile* in the circles of *la ville.*[13] In addition, older publications on honnêteté were being reissued throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries which suggests their appeal to the reading audience.[14] Consequently, it is also not my intention to view honnêteté as necessarily appearing either in its "aristocratic" or "bourgeois" version, allegedly mutually exclusive.[15] Further, I do not intend to build a typology of honnêteté in pre-Revolutionary France by separating Christian and Classic currents of thought in theories of honnêteté, as very often such currents were not historically distinct or separate and coexist in the writings of the same author, for example, La Rochefoucauld.

The variety of approaches to the conception of honnêteté that existed within French society of the Old Regime and the changes of emphasis within its semantic content should not obscure the fact that the underlying idea of honnêteté remained the same for all of them: it was meant to regulate and reconcile the relationships among individuals, as well as among various groups within the society, without disturbing the *status quo*: political (monarchy), social (stratification/structure and hierarchy), moral (religion and the Church), and aesthetic (classical values). The history of honnêteté corresponds to the history of the absolute monarchy in France, the Fronde (1648-1653) being an important caesura. After the Fronde, which was an open civil war against the principle of absolutism (or the last serious attempt of the French nobility to take part in the control of the country), the absolute monarchy consolidated, and so did the conception of honnêteté. The nobility, now appeased but deprived of political power, were seeking means of distinction by adopting sophisticated forms of behaviour and ways of life. As observed by a present-day author, "Courtly etiquette was regarded as the second-tier system of order. It represented the residual domain in which the nobility was granted a degree of formal power to compensate for the real power it was denied."[16] The process of substitution for real power of the formal power of the nobility was not limited to the court circles. Traditional noble values, centred around a cult of heroism and violence, were replaced by a new set of values, that of honnêteté, cultivated both at court and outside it, and based on the refinement of manners and language heretofore foreign to the French nobility.

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[11] *La philosophie des gens de cour* (Paris: Loyson, 1680).

[12] *Instruction pour une jeune princesse, ou l'Idée d'une honnête femme* (Paris: Girard, 1684).

[13] Elena Russo, "'La science du monde': the double tradition of *honnêteté* in Marivaux and Crébillon," *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 319 (1994), p. 137.

[14] For example, *L'homme de cour* by Baltasar Gracian, translated into French by Amelot de La Houssaie, had at least eight editions between 1684 and 1702. See Roger Chartier, "Trajectoires et tensions culturelles de l'Ancien Régime, in: *Histoire de la France. Les formes de la culture*, ed. André Burguière (Paris: Seuil, 1993), p. 316.

[15] As advocated, for example, by Magendie, *La Politesse mondaine*.

Further, honnêteté was never an ideal designed exclusively for the nobility as a social group. Rather, honnêteté was to accommodate contradictions and new developments within the Old Regime (e.g. the upward movement of the middle class *versus* the exclusivity of the nobility) as well as opposite values (e.g. the ideal of leisure lifestyle *versus* entrepreneurial spirit), in order to integrate them into the absolutist system and render them useful in sustaining the status quo. This very purpose put limits to this accommodation. As noticed by one author, "[l]'honnêteté est un concept de classe en ce sens que tout le monde est d'accord qu'un domestique ne saurait être honnête homme."[17] In more general terms,

> honnêteté meant following a set of rules for civilized behavior that share certain elements of what modern-day game theorists call a "mixed-motive game." Participants attempted to cooperate as well as compete, to indulge their own self-love as well as suppress it for the sake of social harmony.[18]

From this perspective, the conception of honnêteté presents itself as a paradigm relating the political, social, moral and aesthetic characteristics inherent in the Old Regime. In the remainder of this chapter I analyze this paradigm by trying to capture what was constant in its shifting content (thus to demonstrate its constitutive elements), rather than the conceptions of honnêteté as represented by individual authors or the context and frequency of occurrences of the word "honnêteté" throughout the period.

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[16] Wolf Lepienies, *Melancholy and Society*, transl. from the German by Jeremy Gaines and Doris Jones (Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 38; see also Edith Kern, "L'honnête homme: Postscript to a Battle of Scholars," *The Romanic Review* 54 (1963), p. 120.

[17] Rémy G. Saisselin, "L'évolution du concept de l'honnêteté de 1660 à 1789," Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1957, p. 79.

[18] Nannerl O. Keohane, *Philosophy and the State in France. The Renaissance to the Enlightenment* (Princeton University Press, 1980), p. 284.

## Honnêteté as an Ideal of Social Conduct

Honnêteté was primarily an ideal of *social* conduct, that is, it referred to relations *among* people, rather than to an individual. This aspect of honnêteté was emphasized by Jean Nicot who, in the *Tresor de la langue françoise* (1573, 1606, 1621), defined an honnête homme as "Bellus homo, urbanus, civilis." It was precisely the combination of social precepts based on the knowledge of human nature that made honnêteté a superior quality for François de Grenaille, historiographer of the Duc d'Orléans.

> pource qu'elle [honnêteté] est agreable à toute sorte de gens, & qu'en la voyant elle seule, on croit voir toutes les belles qualitez ensamble. En effet, c'est la vertu qui semble le plus tenir de toute sorte de vertus, & qui se meslant dans les plus hautes operations de la raison, semble d'ailleurs auoir quelque commerce auecque nos sen. Elle est toute dans l'ame, & neantmoins elle semble paroistre toute à dehors. Elle fait voir grandeur en soulageant nôtre foiblesse, elle n'a pas besoin de se faire aimer, veu que nous l'aimons naturellement.[19]

In the second half of the seventeenth century the social aspect of honnêteté was accepted as a matter of course. "L'engagement des hommes dans la société, est ce qui produit en eux l'idée de l'honnesteté"—wrote François Poulain de la Barre in 1676.[20] Pierre Richelet, in the *Dictionnaire françois* (1680), defined honnêteté as "Civilité, manière d'agir polie, civile et pleine d'honneur, procédé honnête et qui marque de la bonté." In Antoine Furetière's *Dictionnaire universel* (1690) an honnête homme was a person "qui a pris l'air du monde, qui scait vivre." Similarly, in the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie Française* (1694) honnête homme figures as ". . . un homme en qui ne considère alors que les qualités agréables et les manières du monde. . . . homme de bonne conversation, de bonne compagnie."

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[19] Sieur de Grenaille, *Honneste fille*, première partie (Paris: chez Jean Paslé, 1639), Preface. The superiority of specific set of values that made an honnête person was extolled by other authors too. For example, the Abbé de Bellegarde wrote that "Rien n'est plus beau, ni plus éstimable que la qualité l'Honnête Homme: ce titre seul efface tous ceux que la fortune & la faveur peuvent donner . . ." *Le Chrétien Honnête Homme, ou l'Alliance des Devoirs de la vie chrétienne avec les Devoirs de la vie civile* (La Haye: Antoine van Dole, 1736), p. 74.

[20] François Poullain de la Barre, *De l'egalite des deux sexes discours psychique et moral ou l'on voit l'importance de se défaire des Préjuge* (Paris: Jean Du Puis, 1676), p. 169.

With a negative slant, the Abbé Goussault, too, emphasized indispensability of the social dimension of honnêteté: "Il faut sçavoir le monde pour y vivre."[21] Moreover, he believed that this dimension took precedence over others constituting an honnête person.

> Pourvu qu'on soit civil et agréable en compagnie que l'on aime les plaisirs, que l'on sache vivre avec cette politesse que la routine du monde apprend, que l'on ait quelque habitude chez les grands, on passe aisément pour honnête homme . . . Chez les dames, pourvu qu'un homme soit toujours prêt de donner la comédie ou d'aller à la promenade, et que son équipage soit en bon état, c'est un fort galant et fort honnête homme. . . . A parler sincèrement, c'est peu de chose que d'être honnête homme selon le monde.[22]

In contrast to the Abbé Goussault, the Abbé de Bellegarde emphasized in his *Le chrétien honnête homme* (1736) positive aspects of the social involvements of an honnête person: "[l]a Société est un rémede que Dieu nous a donné, pour nous soulager & nous consoler dans nos disgraces. Nos chagrins sont beaucoup adoucis, par la présence & les discours de nos Amis qui compatissent à nos peines."[23] One of the most successful eighteenth-century authors on honnêteté, Le Maitre de Claville, echoed these opinions: "La première science de l'honnete homme est le savoir vivre.[24] Thus an honnête person had no *raison d'être* outside the society.

### *L'Art de plaire*

For Méré, to be a truly honnête person, the most important thing was to know the art of pleasing. ". . . c'est seulement pour être agréable qu'il faut souhaiter d'être honnête homme."[25] The necessity of pleasing as a constitutive element of honnêteté was not, of course, peculiar to Méré but reflected a fundamental implication of honnêteté as the art of sociability, that is, that every member of polite society be agreeable company for others and that the *art de plaire* was a mutual interaction. Jean Pic, canon regular of Saint Victor, in his *Les Devoirs de la vie civile* (1682) made it explicit that "[l]'Honnêteté ne veut point qu'on ne s'accomode que de ceux dont le tempérament a rapport au nôtre."[26] "Nothing," wrote Ortigue de Vaumorière in 1688, "renders us more agreeable than Complaisance: It is this which makes up the Charms of Society; without it we must neither expect friendship among men, nor a diverting Conversation in Company, nor any part at play, or in a walk, or any other diversion."[27] "Complaisance est une souplesse & flexibilité d'ame, par laquelle nous-nous accommodons aux affections des autres, & témoignons entrer dans leurs sentiments, approuvant & fecondant leur actions . . ."—echoed Eustache Le Noble in 1695.[28] It was the responsibility of an honnête person to control and temper his emotions.

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[21] Goussault, *Reflexions sur les defauts ordinaires des hommes et sur leur bonne qualitez* (Paris: chez la veuve M. Guerout, 1692), Chapter IV: "Sçavoir le monde," p. 50.

[22] *Ibid.*, pp. 267-272.

[23] Bellegarde, *Le chrétien honnête homme*, p. 144.

[24] Charles-François Nicolas Le Maitre de Claville, *Traité du vrai merité de l'homme considéré dans tous les âges dans toutes les conditions* (Paris: Saugrain, 1742), p. 133.

> Si la nature jette malgré lui quelques mouvements d'indignation, de colère ou de haine dans son coeur, loin de les entretenir, il [honnête homme] aura grand soin de les réprimer, et surtout de ne les laisser jamais paraitre.[29]

In *Traité de la société civile* (1726) a Jesuit Father, Claude Buffier, gave a detailed account of what pleases and ensures success in polite society: always talk obligingly to all, do not miss any occasion to praise, contradict as little as possible, and avoid manners which are singular, repulsive, bizarre, annoying, inattentive, pedantic, *précieuse*, mean, pestering, and captious.[30] As noticed by a present-day author, the art de plaire, in the sense of consideration for others, was not devoid of moral and religious content.

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[25] Letter to Mme de Lesdiguières, in *Oeuvres* (1682), I, p. 55.

[26] Jean Pic, *Les Devoirs de la vie civile* (Paris: Cochart, 1681), p. 202.

[27] Pierre Ortigue, sieur de Vaumorière, *The art of pleasing in conversation* (London: for R. Bentley, 1691), p. 74 (first published as *L'Art de plaire dans la conversation*, Paris: Jean Guignard, 1688).

[28] Eustache Le Noble, *L'école du monde, ou instruction d'un père à un fils, touchant la mamiere dont il faut vivre dans le Monde* (1695), 2 vols. (Amsterdam: chez Zacharie Chatelain, 1739), I, p. 118.

[29] Louis de Sacy, *Traité de l'amitié* (Paris: chez la veuve de Claude Brbin, 1703), pp. 300-302.

[30] As quoted by Robert Mauzi, *L'idée du bonheur dans la littérature et la pensée françaises au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Armand Colin, 1969), pp. 584-585.

> Consideration for others was the only *devoir* that could survive in the burned out debris of the period after the Fronde, just as *honnêteté* was the only seemly role—the only one that agreed and sat well with the tenor of life as it actually was—and thus the only authentic expression of that twilight world.[31]

But the art of pleasing was not an art for art's sake. In his *Pensées sur l'honnêteté*, the seventeenth-century author, Damien Mitton, called honnêteté "well-regulated *amour-propre*" which implied both indulging and supressing one's self-love for the sake of social harmony and individual happiness. The most certain way to achieve happiness, Mitton believed, is to seek it in such a way that others can be happy along with us. "For if one attempts to think only of oneself, one continually runs into opposition and conflict, whereas if we only wish to be happy on the condition that others are happy also, all the obstacles are removed and the whole world lends us a hand."[32] In a similar vein, the Abbé de Bellegarde wrote that "[l]a grande règle pour plaire est de s'accommoder au goûts des gens, & de leur faire entrevoir quelque avantage des liaisons qu'on leur propose."[33] The same author made it explicit elsewhere that the art of pleasing implied deference in every-day social relationships:

> Pour se faire au goût du monde, il faut rendre à chacun ce qu'il a droit d'exiger de nous: Nos Supérieurs demandent du respect, de la déférence, & de la soûmission; nos égaux de la civilité & de la douceur; nos parens se l'amitié, nos amis de la tendresse, & de la confiance . . . [34]

For François-Augustin de Moncrif the art of pleasing assumed reciprocity: to please meant to make an agreeable impression on other people's minds, which disposed or even caused them to like us.[35]

The implied mutual exchange gave the art of pleasing a pragmatic slant, even as a social game played by equals: those who refused to play automatically excluded themselves from a polite circle. If used properly in contacts with social superiors, precepts of politeness guaranteed success. It was not by accident that Faret's manual of manners for a courtier was entitled *L'Honnête homme, ou l'art de plaire à la cour*. Honnêteté was equated with the art of pleasing at the court; in other words, honnêteté (the art of pleasing) became a technique of survival and success in a highly competitive environment. Mastery of this technique could be a value in itself, highly praised by writers on honnêteté. "It is a vulgar Mistake"—wrote Trotti de La Chétardie in *Instruction for the Use of a Young Lady of Quality* (1684)—"that Vice flourishes most in Courts. Whatever Passions reign there, they put on, at least, a handsome Disguise. There is an Appearance of Decency observ'd, which, if it does not lessen the Crime, at least, prevents the Contagion of it."[36]

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[31] Vivien Thweatt, *La Rochefoucauld and the Seventeenth-century Concept of Self* (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1980), p. 55.

[32] Henry A. Grubbs, Jr., *Damien Mitton (1618-1690). Bourgeois honnête homme* [1932] (New York: Kraus Reprint Corporation, 1965), pp. 55-56.

[33] Bellegarde, *Le chrétien honnête homme*, p. 143.

[34] Bellegarde, *Réflexions sur ce qui peut plaire ou deplaire dans le commerce du monde*, 5th ed. (La Haye: Guillaume de Voys, 1720), pp. 73-74.

[35] "J'entens par le mot de plaire, une impression agréable que nous faisons sur l'esprit des autres hommes, qui les dispose ou même les détermine à nous aimer." François-Augustin de Moncrif, *Essais sur la necessité et sur les moyens de plaire* (Paris: Prault,

For an honnête person outside the court honnêteté could also be a technique, as indicated by the explicitly pragmàtic orientation of numerous manuals meant for *la ville*. For example, in *Instruction d'un père à son fils sur la manière de se conduire dans le monde* (1730), Dupuy La Chapelle advises a young man to endure the whims and contempt of his social superiors to secure his career.[37] The difference between an homme habile (typified by a courtier) and an honnête homme (not dependent on the king's favours), in theory representing two distinctive approaches to sociability (one pragmatic, allowing for deceit, manipulation and the pursuit of individual career, exemplified by Faret's manual; another idealistic, detached from pragmatic preoccupations and focussed on achieving ideal balance, exemplified by Méré's philosophy), in social practice was more often than not only a difference in degree.[38] Louis-Charles Fougeret de Monbron was just one of many authors

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1738), p. 2.

[36] Joachim-Jacques Trotti de La Chétardie, *Instruction for the Use of a Young Lady of Quality or the Idea of a Woman of Merit* (Edinburgh: W. Cheyne, 1734), p. 19 (first published as *Instruction pour une Jeune princesse ou l'Idée d'une honnête femme*, Paris: Girard, 1684).

[37] As quoted by Mauzi, *L'idées du bonheur*, p. 585.

[38] Ellen Russo, in "'La science du monde': the double tradition of *honnêteté* in Marivaux and Crébillon," pp. 129-150, separates these two modes of sociability for the sake of demonstrating their existence in two eighteenth-century novels: Crébillon's *Les Egarements du coeur et de l'esprit* and Marivaux's *La vie de Marianne*. She then proceeds to discuss them as if they existed not only in the novels but also in social practice. Such projection, however, cannot be supported by evidence. Marivaux's description of the salon of Mme Dorsin (porte-parole of Mme de Tencin), as allegedly

who provided evidence for this when he wrote in 1750 that "Je me suis parfaitement convaincu . . . que le plus honnête homme n'est, à proprement parler, qu'un habile comédien, qui possède le grand art de fourber sous le masque imposant de la candeur et de l'équité."[39]

***Bienséance***

For an individual, bienséance consisted in mastering one's passions, such as ambition, hatred and love, and making them socially profitable,[40] according to the Cartesian belief, dominant at the time, that reason can guide the will toward mastery of the passions.[41] "Les Passions ne sont bonnes qu'autant qu'elles sont réglées par la Raison, & qu'elles lui sont parfaitement soûmise & assujetties"—was the Abbé de Bellegarde's statement on the matter.[42] In social relations bienséance designated one's own place in society and ensured conformity to what was acceptable by society. Antoine Courtin defined bienséance as "l'art de placer tout ce que l'on dit ou fait à l'endroit qui convient."[43] The first thing was to recognize one's place in society and one's precise distance from people of every other rank. As Jacques Revel put it succinctly, "Courtin forced his readers to enter into the rituals of a hierarchical society."[44] More specifically, bienséance required that sex, age, profession, time and place be taken into

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free from constraints and intrigue, is an idealized picture, far from the reality of Mme de Tencin's salon. I will discuss the social practice of honnêteté on the example of Parisian salons in Chapter II.

[39] [Louis-Charles] Fougeret de Monbron, *Le Cosmopolite ou le citoyen du monde suivi de La capitale des Gaules ou la Nouvelle Babylone*, ed. by Raymond Trousson (Bordeaux: Éditions Ducros, 1970), p. 59.

[40] Baltasar Castiglione, *The Book of the Courtier*, trans. Charles Singleton (Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1959), p. 302; Vaumorière, *The art of pleasing in conversation*, p. 332.

[41] René Descartes, "Le Traité des passions," in *Oeuvres et lettres*, ed. André Bridoux (Paris: Gallimard, 1958), arts. 45, 50, 211; pp, 717, 721, 794-795.

[42] Bellegarde, *Le chrétien honnête homme*, p. 398; also Abbé Goussault, *Reflexions sur les defauts ordinaires des hommes*, p. 307.

[43] Antoine Courtin, *Nouveau traité de la civilité qui se pratique en France parmi les honnestes gens*, 2nd ed. (Amsterdam: Jacques le Jeune, 1672), p. 4.

[44] Jacques Revel, "The Uses of Civility," in *A History of Private Life*, vol. III: *Passions of the Renaissance*, ed. Roger Chartier, trans. from the French by Arthur Goldhammer (Cambridge, Massachusetts: The Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1989), p. 198.

consideration. "Les bienséances sont d'une étendue infinie," wrote the Abbé de Bellegarde, "le sexe, l'âge, la profession, le caractère, le temps, le lieu imposent des devoirs différent: il faut connaitre ces différences et s'y assujettir."[45] "Il est . . . absolument necessaire," wrote de Chalesme in 1671, "d'observer toutes les circonstances qui peuvent regarder les personnes devant qui on parle, le lieu où l'on est, et le sujet dont on s'entretient."[46] Charles Brisebarre wrote in *L'Art de devenir heureux dans la société* (1690) that "Pour avoir l'air agréable & prevenant, il faut sçavoir l'usage du temps & les modes. On est ridicule quand on s'habille autrement que les autres, & on juge presque toujours de l'esprit d'une personne par la manière dont elle se met."[47] As Roger Chartier noticed, Jean-Baptiste de La Salle in his *Les Régles de la Bienséance et de la civilité chrétienne* (1703) scrupulously respected the social differences that determine conduct. "It is not enough to act in conformity with one's own condition; we must judge, in each situation, the respective social quality of other people so that differences between them can be respected accurately."[48]

Honnêteté and bienséance were inseparable: "Les regles de *l'honnesteté* sont les regles de la bienseance, des bonnes moeurs"—wrote Furetière in 1690.[49] *Dictionnaire de l'Académie françoise* (1694), too, linked honnêteté and bienséances: the term honnêteté was defined as "convenable à la raison, bienséant à la condition, à la profession, et à l'age des personnes."[50] Further, it was made clear that "il n'est pas de l'honnêteté de faire des choses trop familières devant des gens à qui on doit du respect." For the Chevalier de Méré, honnêteté meant nothing else but "d'exceller en tout ce qui regarde les agréments et les bienséances de la vie"[51] and ". . . le plus difficile secret pour être honnête homme dépend de trouver le tempérament le plus juste en toutes ses actions, et de se connaitre à la bienséance."[52]

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[45] Bellegarde, *Réflexions sur le ridicule et sur les moyens de l'éviter . . .*, 2nd. ed. (1697), p. 443. See also the same author's *Les règles de la vie civile, avec les traits d'histoire pour former l'esprit d'un jeune prince* [1693], in: *Oeuvres diverses de M. l'abbé de Ballegarde*, 4 vols. (Paris: C. Robustel, 1723), IV, p. 332.

[46] De Chalesme, *L'Homme de qualité, ou les moyens de vivre en homme de bien et en homme du monde* (Paris: André Pralard, 1671), p. 180.

[47] Charles Brisebarre, *L'Art de devenir heureux dans la société* (Paris: Claude Barbin, 1690), p. 58.

[48] Roger Chartier, "From Texts to manners. A Concept and Its Books: *Civilité* between Aristocratic Distinction and Popular Appropriation," in *The Cultural Uses of Print in Early Modern France*, trans. by Lydia G. Cochrane (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1987), p. 90.

[49] Antoine Furetière, *Dictionnaire universel, contenant généralement tous les mots françois tant vieux que modernes et les termes des sciences et des arts*, 3 vols. (La Haye et Rotterdam, 1690, Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1970), vol. II.

[50] *Dictionnaire de l'Académie françoise dédié au Roy*, 2 vols. (Paris: J. B. Coignard,

> Celui qui garde en tout la bienséance [wrote Méré] vit toujours bien, car elle consiste en cela que ce qu'on fait ou ce qu'on dit ne soit pas seulement bon en soi-même, mais aussi qu'à toutes sortes d'égards il ne s'y trouve rien à redire.[53]

Bienséance naturally implied the acceptance of the existing social hierarchy. "On a fait une vertu de la modération," wrote La Rochefoucault, "pour borner l'ambition des grands hommes, et pour consoler les gens médiocres de leur peu de fortune et de leur peu de mérite."[54] Méré, too, linked honnêteté with the acceptance of one's place in society:

> A mon sense la plus grande preuve qu'on a de l'Esprit, et qu'on l'a bien fait, c'est de bien vivre et de se conduire toûjours comme on doit. Cela consiste à prendre en toutes les rencontres le party le plus honneste, et à le bien soûtenir; et le party le plus honneste est celuy qui paroist le plus conforme à l'estat de vie ou' l'on se trouve.[55]

In a similar vein, the Abbé de Bellegarde argued that ". . . l'Honnête Homme s'étudie à remplir tous les Devoirs que les Bienséances du Monde éxigent de lui, par rapport à son Caractère & à son Etat"[56] and that "[o]n ne peut pas remplir les Devoirs de la vie civile, qu'en observant les règles qui conviennent à chaque état, & qui régardent égalément les Hommes & les Femmes . . ."[57] Observing such rules involved restrictions as to socializing with one's social inferiors. "Un honneste homme"—wrote the Abbé Goussault in 1692—"trouve toujours bien plus son compte dans les Compagnies des gens de qualité, que dans

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1694), I, p. 569.

[51] Méré, *Oeuvres*, III, p. 70.

[52] Chevalier de Méré, *Lettres*, 2 vols. (Paris: Par la Compagnie de libraries, 1689), I, p. 223.

[53] Méré, *Oeuvres*, III, p. 29.

[54] François de La Rochefoucault, *Réflexions, ou sentences etmaximes morales*, ed. by Dominique Secretan (Geneva: Librairie Droz, 1967), nr 308.

[55] Méré, *Oeuvres*, II, p. 66.

[56] Bellegarde, *Le chrétien honnête homme*, p. 2

celles des Marchands ou du menu Peuple."[58] Elsewhere the same author emphasized that "[l]'ambition d'un honnête homme est bornée par ce qu'il possede. Il ne cherche pas à se sourrir d'une vaine esperance, & il ne se flatte pas sans cesse sur les biens que l'avenir lui permet."[59]

An upward movement of the middle class was carefully scrutinized and usually cost a climber more than the money to purchase a noble title. The sorting device between the social in-group and the outsiders was not formal membership but the knowledge of the subtleties of the art de plaire and the bienséance. As emphasized by many writers, honnêteté was acquired primarily through being exposed to polite society. Mlle de Scudéry, for example, did not leave any doubt as to the role of polite society in the formation of an honnête person when she wrote that "La politesse ne s'acquiert que dans le monde."[60] According to François Poullain de la Barre, "[l]'engagement des hommes dans la société est ce qui produit en eux l'idée de l'honnêteté."[61] Chevalier de Méré, too, believed that the best way to become an honnête person was to practice and to have good models.[62] Abbé Goussault emphasized the vital role of polite society in achieving the right balance between *esprit* and *politesse*:

> Un homme qui a beaucoup d'esprit, mais qui n'a point la politesse ny agrément que les conversations du monde donnent, ne laisse pas d'estre homme d'esprit. On peut dire de luy que c'est un Diamant brut, qui a besoin d'estre mis en oeuvre, afin qu'on sçache ce qu'il vaut. Un homme qui a de politesse, mais qui n'a point de fond d'esprit & point de solidité, ressemble à un Diamant du Temple propre à parer une Musicienne de l'Opera, ou une Actrice de la Comedie.[63]

Roger Chartier quotes late seventeenth-century editions of *La Civilité puérile et honnête pour l'instruction des Enfants* . . ., which circulated in hundreds of thousands of copies, where one could find familiar precepts: ". . . the shortest route to becoming an

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[57] *Ibid.*, p. 168.

[58] Goussault, *Reflexions sur les defauts ordinaires des hommes*, p. 54.

[59] Goussault, *L'usage du monde ou le parfait modele d'un honneste homme* (Paris: Michel Brunet & Rigaut, 1707), p. 167.

[60] Mlle de Scudéry, *Conversations nouvelles sur divers sujets*, 2 vols. (Paris: Barbin, 1684), I, p. 135.

[61] François Poullain de la Barre, *De l'égalité des deux sexes*, p. 169.

[62] Méré, *Oeuvres*, III, p. 75.

[63] *Reflexions sur les defauts ordinaires des hommes*, p. 88.

*honnête homme* is to haunt *honnêtes gens* and to pay attention to their ways of acting, because examples have much more effect on our minds than words."[64] "Ce n'est ny la naissance, ny l'esprit, ny le bien, qui rend ceux qui ont ces avantages honnestes gens"—echoed the Abbé Goussault in 1692—"c'est la maniere dont ils usent de ces avantages."[65] Consequently, a bourgeois climber poorly imitating an honnête person was an object of public ridicule.

> . . . voir des Bourgeoises replâtrées [wrote Morvan de Bellegarde], dont la parure, le train, les emmeublements, la table font envie aux femmes de la premiere qualité: mais elles se consolent par le ridicule où tombent ceux qui s'élevent au-dessus de leur rang.[66]

The adjective *bourgeois* was among the favourite terms of depreciation used in many contexts and was typically associated with *fausse politesse*. François de Callières, gave the best example of it in his *De bon et de mauvais usage dans le manières de s'exprimer des façons de parler bourgeois et en quoy elles sont differentes de celles de la Cour* (1693), in which he uses the epithet *bourgeois* negatively throughout the book.

Thus, the observance of the bienséances guaranteed a social equilibrium not only among individuals of the same rank, but also hierarchically. Similarly, honnêteté assumed that both men and women observed bienséances appropriate for their sex, thus ensured that traditionally gendered social roles for men and women were not violated.

### *Juste milieu*

Honnêteté implied a sense of measure, moderation, order, and regularity. As an honnête person was entirely dependent on society, he had to place himself on the level of compromise and mediocrity. Excessiveness, whether in behaviour or feelings, along with exaggeration and affectation were among the most often criticized vices of an honnête person.[67] The goal of an honnête person was thus to excel in the art of life in society by finding the proper balance between the extremes: *juste milieu* was an ideal between too much and too little.[68] For Jean Pic, "[l]a véritable honnêteté est toujours simple, elle fuit l'ostentation en toutes choses, et il y en peut avoir quelquefois autant à se taire comme à parler."[69] ". . . il faut garder le milieu entre la trop grande sensibilité, et la trop grande insolence"—wrote an anonymous author of a conduct book in 1685.[70] It was as unacceptable to exaggerate in bienséances as not to observe them at all.[71] Excessive praising, for example, was an evidence of the lack of proportions and an exaggeration, irreconcilable with the rules of honnêteté.[72] In the middle of the eighteenth century Le Maitre de Claville defined the philosophy of honnêteté as nothing else but ". . . le secret d'allier la sagesse et la gaieté, l'érudition et la politesse, la fermeté et la complaisance, beaucoup de raison et un peu d'esprit."[73]

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[64] Chartier, "From Texts to Manners," p. 90.

[65] *Reflexions sur les defauts ordinaires des hommes*, pp. 302-303.

[66] Bellegarde, "Les Réflexions sur le riducule, et sur les moyens de l'eviter, ou sont représentez les moeurs et les différens caractères des personnes de ce siècle," (1696), in *Oeuvres diverses*, I, p. 210; also p. 197.

[67] For example, ". . . extrémites sont vicieuses." François de Callières, *Du bel esprit ou*

"Naturalness," then, was the ideal of honnêteté, but naturalness resulting usually from careful study and long practice, rather than the "return to nature" in Rousseau's sense. *Sprezzatura*, an air of natural grace or nonchalance acquired and maintained through self-discipline, was not only an essential characteristic of Castiglione's courtier,[74] but also an ideal of the honnête person. Méré, for example, believed that " . . . plus elle [honnêteté] est

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*sont examinés les sentiments qu'on a d'ordinaire dans le monde* (Amsterdam: Pierre Brunel, 1695), p. 3; ". . . l'Affectation . . . ternit et soüille les plus belles choses . . ." Faret, *L'Honnête homme*, p. 20; Jacques Du Bosc, *La honneste femme*, 3 vols. (Paris: Pierre Billaine), I, pp. 371-406.

[68] ". . . le grand art de plaire consiste à trouver le milieu entre le trop et trop peu." Bellegarde, *Réflexions sur la politesse des moeurs* (1698); "Médiocrité. C'est un milieu entre le trop et le peu." Richelet, *Dictionnaire françois*.

[69] Jean Pic, *Les devoirs* (1681), p. 179.

[70] *Les règles de la sagesse ou la manière de se conduire saintement dans la vie chrétienne* (Paris, 1685), Règle X.

[71] For example, a eulogy was as much a *faux pas* as its opposite; see, for example, Méré's remarks about the hypocrisy of eulogies, *Oeuvres*, II, p. 123.

[72] "Combien dans le monde de Magdelons qui aimeroient mieux avoir fait un 'oh oh', qu'un Poëme epique. Combien de femmes sçavantes qui sont amoureuses d'un quoi qu'on dire." [Jean Laurent Lecerf de La Viéville, sieur de Fresneuse], *Comparaison de la musique italienne et de la musique françoise ou en examinant en détails les avantages des spectacles et le mérite des compositeurs des deux nations, on montre quelles sont les vraies beautés de la musique* (1704-1706), 2nd ed. (Bruxelles: François Foppens, 1705-1706; Genève: Minkoff, 1972), sixième dialogue, p. 344.

[73] Le Maitre De Claville, *Traité du vrai mérite de l'homme* (1742),. I, p. 25.

naturelle, plus elle plait; et c'est la principale cause de la bienséance, que de faire d'un air agréable ce qui nous est naturel."[75] Nicolas Rémond des Cours was one of many writers on honnêteté who warned against artificiality.

> . . no man should go in Quest of artificial. Set-offs, which, when they are obtain'd, will still look unnatural, since 'tis certain, that every Body is so much the less lovely, the more pains they take to appear to. This holds equally in Virtues, where Affectation in 'em destroys all their Charms, and blasts the whole Merit they pretend to.[76]

### *Conformity*

Honnêteté as an ideal of social conduct excluded not only affectation of manners, uncontrolled passions, exaggeration, unwarranted social aspiration, and impolite behaviour, but also whatever would single out an individual from polite society. It was an ability to adapt to diverse circumstances and not personal opinions that made an honnête person.[77] "C'est la conformité qui fait qu'on se plait ensamble" was Méré's statement on the matter.[78] The principle of conformity ensured a trouble-free social relationship both within polite society and between members of this society and outsiders. In the latter case, the tone to conform to was the one set by polite society.

In honnête discourse *savant* and *pedant* (sometimes identified) were terms of depreciation aimed at those who most often violated the principle of conformity. In his letter of 1727 to Houdar de La Motte soliciting an operatic *livret*, Jean-Philippe Rameau defined a savant musician as one who "neglects nothing in the different combinations of notes; but he is thought to be so completely absorbed by these combinations that all else is sacrified

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[74] Castiglione, *The book of the Courtier*, p. 43.

[75] Méré, *Oeuvres*, III, p. 64.

[76] Nicolas Rémond des Cours, *The true conduct of Persons of Quality* (London: for Walter Kettilby, 1694), p. 81 (first published as *La véritable politique des personnes de qualité*, Paris: J. Boudot, 1692).

[77] Jean-Pierre Boon, "L'idéal de 'l'honneste homme' est-il compatible avec la théorie évolutive des *Essais* de Montainge?" *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 83 (1968), p. 304.

[78] Méré, *Oeuvres*, II, p. 106.

including sentiment and the spirit of the work."[79] Rameau's savant is the one who is unable to overcome his professional narrow-mindedness.

In general, the epithets *savant* and *pedant* were typically associated with people whose only means of subsistence was their professional activity (that is, those who were not "nobles or living like nobles") and who were ignorant of the rules of honnêteté; rules that could be acquired only through an exposure to polite society. Like *bourgeois*, *savant* and *pedant* were powerful notions of depreciation commonly used to keep outsiders of all sorts at a distance from polite society. It was this very function that often made an exclusion arbitrary, as noticed by Charles Sorel.[80]

The belief that specialized knowledge is hardly compatible with honnêteté was expressed by some seventeenth-century French authors on the subject and is viewed by some present-day scholars as a reflection of one of the fundamental characteristics of classical thought: the aspiration to universality.[81] It was conformity, not individuality, and general, not specialized knowledge which were honnête ideals; knowledge acquired through an exchange among the members of an honnête discourse, not by bookish study. Blaise Pascal, for example, believed that

> Les gens universels ne sont appelés ni poètes, ni géomètres, etc.; mais ils sont tout cela. . . . Puisq'on ne peut être universel et savoir tout ce qui se peut savoir sur tout, il faut savoir un peu de tout. Car il est bien plus beau de savoir quelque chose de tout que de savoir tout d'une chose; cette universalité est la plus belle.[82]

Trotti de La Chétardie formulated the same idea in terms of precepts for members of polite society:

> A man of the World ought to be Universal, and tho' he know not things to the bottom, yet he ought to know so much of them, as to be able to speak his

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[79] As by James R. Anthony, *French Baroque Music from Beaujoyeulx to Rameau* (New York: W.W. Norton & Com., Inc., 1974), p. 111.

[80] ". . . le nom de Pedant est quelquefois donné pour injure aux hommes les plus Doctes." Charles Sorel, *De la prudence ou des bonnes reigles de la vie* (Paris: André Pralard, 1673), p. 288.

[81] See, for example, Jean-Pierre Dens, *L'honnête homme et la critique du goût. Esthétique et société au XVII- siècle* (Lexington, Kentucky: French Forum, 1981), p. 23.

[82] Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, ed. Brunschvicg (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1964), pp. 34 and 37.

> opinion without clashing with good Sense, and listen with delight to those who speak upon any Subject whatsoever.[83]

The aspiration to universality declared by some writers on honnêteté and their contempt for both bookish knowledge and money-making occupations, as apparently irreconcilable with the ideals of honnêteté, has made some present day authors believe that an ideal honnête person was incarnated in the person of leisure, with neither a profession nor formal education. The Chevalier de Méré contributed to this belief when he wrote on one occasion that ". . . la guerre . . . est le plus beau mêtier du monde, il en faut demeurer d'accord; mais à le bien prendre, un honneste homme n'a point de mêtier"[84] and on another occasion that honnêteté is a profession in itself: "Ce n'est donc pas un métier que d'être honnête homme."[85]

In fact, Méré himself did not mean it literally. The point was, as so often with honnêteté, in the form, rather than in the content: an honnête person was not supposed to *display* any attributes of his profession (if he had any), such as specialized language, attire or bearing. "Quoy qu'il sçache parfaitement une chose," explained Méré, "et que mesme il soit obligé d'y passer sa vie, il me semble que ni sa manière d'agir, ni son entretien, ne font point remarquer . . "[86] "Il y a deux sortes d'Estude," Méré elaborated elsewhere,

> l'une qui ne cherche que l'Art et les Regles; l'autre qui n'y songe point du tout, et qui n'a pour but que de rencontrer par instinct et par reflections, ce qui doit plaire en tous les sujets particuliers. S'il falloit se declarer pour l'une des deux, ce seroit à mon sens pour la derniere, et sur tout lors qu'on sçait par experience ou par sentiment, qu'on se connoist à ce qui sied le mieux. Mais l'autre n'est pas à negliger, pourveu qu'on se souvienne toûjours que ce qui reüssit vaut mieux que les Regles. C'est aussi de là que les meilleurs sont prises.[87]

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[83] Joachim-Jacques Trotti de La Chetardie, *Instructions for a Young Nobleman: or, the Idea of a Person of Honour*, done out of French (London: for R. Bentley, and S. Magnes, 1683), pp. 12-13 (first published as *Instructions pour un jeune seigneur ou l'idée d'un galant homme*, 2 vols. Paris: T. Girard, 1683).

[84] Méré, *Oeuvres*, I, p. 11.

[85] *Ibid.*, III, p. 70.

[86] *Ibid.*, I, p. 11.

[87] *Ibid.*, II, p. 109.

Specialized knowledge became increasingly important for sustaining and glorifying the monarchy. As noticed by a present-day scholar, "The regime relied heavily on the scholarly expertise of its historiographers, numismatists, poets, playwrights and others whose talents were nurtured in academies."[88] Just as from the beginning of the seventeenth century manuals for honnête courtiers provided guidance on how to succeed at the court, in the course of time similar manuals began appearing for new categories of professionals.[89]

It was thus a matter of the accommodation of scholastic knowledge to polite discourse, and not the knowledge itself, to which the rules of honnêteté referred. It was also a matter of the right balance between time spent on bookish study and on conversing. Sorel warned that "[q]ui meneroit toûjours la vie d'éscholier ne seroit jamais Maitre; Il faut mesme aporter de la moderation à la lecture aux Escrites, craignant que l'excez de ce travail ne nous rende moins propres aux entretiens de la parole & à la société des hommes."[90] Saint-Evremond believed that "[l]'étude immoderée engendre une crasse dans l'esprit, & gauchit tous ses sentiments; il faut que la conversation de nos amis l'épure et le redresse."[91] In a rather extreme way, but in a similar vein, in the mid-seventeenth century, Jacques Callières recommended *la science du monde* and conversations with ladies as far more useful to the formation of the honnête homme than academic learning, which he characterized as an *ordure* of which a gentilhomme must purge himself.[92] Le Maitre de Claville wrote in 1734 that: "Il s'agit de ne pas rester ignorant, et de ne pas devenir pédant."[93] Polite society was viewed as necessary for accommodating formal knowledge into an honnête discourse and the need for such accommodation was a matter of course, as honnêteté was considered superior to scholastic education.[94] Thus, as opposed to the views of some present-day authors, specialized knowledge was not excluded from the conception of honnêteté, but was accommodated into it, as such knowledge became indispensable to sustain the monarchy.

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[88] Erica Harth, *Cartesian Women. Versions and Subversions of Rational Discourse in the Old Regime* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 25.

[89] For example, François de Callières, *De la manière de négocier avec ses souveraines, de l'utilité des négociations, du choix des ambassadeurs et des envoyez, et des qualites nécessaires pour réussir dans ces employs* (Paris: M. Brunet, 1716).

[90] Charles Sorel, *De la prudence ou des bonnes reigles de la vie* (Amsterdm: Aug. Aubry, 1673), p. 292.

[91] Charles de Saint-Evremond, *Seconde partie des Ouvres meslées de M. D.* *** (Paris: Claude Barbin, 1671), p. 104.

[92] *La fortune des gens de qualité* (Paris: Estienne Loyson, 1661), pp. 299-302.

[93] *Traité du vrai mérite*, p. 130.

*La science du monde*, popularized knowledge accessible to polite society was an invention of the time and one answer to the tension between specialized knowledge and the exigencies of honnêteté, allowing for a common ground between the savants (representing scholastic education) and polite society (representing honnête values). Fontenelle, an habitué of many Parisian salons throughout his almost century-long life, initiated a digest-type of publication for polite society in his conversational work on the ancients/moderns debate, the *Dialogue des morts* (1683), and continued in the *Entretiens sur la pluralité des mondes* (1686), an exposition of the Copernican system in the form of conversations between a Cartesian philosopher and a Marquise during promenades in a park.[95]

In his "Discours sur les Motifs qui doivent nous encourager aux sciences" (1725) Montesquieu enthusiastically supported works dealing with complex issues in a way available to the general audience. One should not judge the utility of a work by the style chosen by its author, believed Montesquieu, because one often conveys substantial content in a light manner and trivial content gravely.

> . . . les sciences gagnent beaucoup [wrote Montesquieu] à être traitées d'une manière ingénieuse et délicate; c'est par là qu'on ôte la sécheresse, qu'on prévient la lassitude, et qu'on les met à la portée der tous les esprits. Si le Père Malebranche avoit été un écrivain moins enchanteur, sa philosophie seroit resteée dans le fond d'un collège comme dans une espèce de monde souterrain. Il y a des cartésiens qui n'ont jamais lu que les *Mondes* de M. de Fontenelle; cet ouvrage est plus utile qu'on ouvrage plus fort, parce que c'est le plus sérieux que la plupart des gens soient en état de lire.[96]

Another way of solving the tensions between honnêteté and specialized knowledge was to demonstrate its usefulness in the everyday social practice of an honnête person, as a contempt on the part of polite society for some areas of scholastic knowledge resulted precisely from a conviction that such knowledge was useless in everyday social practice. Faret, for example, believed that one would profit more from studying "dans le grand livre du monde que dans Aristote."[97] However, inspired by Montaigne, he admitted that history could provide useful knowledge because it helped to form the right judgement. In a similar vein, Morvan de Bellegarde wrote in 1693 that

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[94] See, for example, Bury, *Littérature et politesse*, p. 57, and Roger Zuber, "La mise à l'écart des vrais savants" in *Précis de littérature du XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1990), pp. 12-127.

[95] For a discussion on gender relations involved in Fontenelle's works, see Harth, *Cartesian Women*, Chapter 3 "Fontenelle and the Ladies."

[96] *Oeuvres complètes de Montesquieu*, 2 vols., ed. by Roger Caillois (Paris: Gallimard, 1949), I, p. 57.

> . . . l'étude de la Politique, de la Morale, de l'Histoire, du Monde, est plus utile que tout ce qu'on apprend au Collège, et que la Philosophie même qui n'a que des idées abstraites, et des rafinements de nul usage pour le comerce de la vie, et qui gâtent plutôt l'esprit, qu'ils ne le redressent.[98]

Saint-Evremond, too, believed that some areas of knowledge could be particularly useful in the everyday social practice of an honnête person.

> Je ne trouve point de sciences qui touchent plus particulièrement les honnêtes gens [wrote Saint-Evremond] que la morale, la politique et la connaissance des belles lettres. La première regarde la raison, la seconde la société, la troisième la conversation. L'une vous apprend à gouverner vos passions. Par l'autre, vous vous instruisez des affaires de l'état, et réglez votre conduite dans la fortune. La dernière polit d'esprit, inspire la délicatesse et l'agrément.[99]

In a chapter on "What a Young Gentleman ought to Learn" in *The True Conduct of Persons of Quality* (1692), Rémond des Cours states that the general education of a young gentleman of quality should include "Morality, Politick and History . . . the first plants steddy Rules in his Mind, by which he is to square his Behaviour; the other two acquaint him with the Rocks where other young Beginners have been shipwreck'd."[100] In addition, Rémond des Cours recommends some familiarity with arithmetic, geography, "the Doctrine of the Sphere" and geometry, which makes those who acquire it

> reserv'd and circumspect in their Judgements, teacheth them in their Quest of all sorts of Truths to mingle an exact Method, and which inures them to keep

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[97] Faret, *L'honnête homme*, pp. 25-26.

[98] Bellegarde, *Les règles de la vie civile*, Avertissement.

[99] Saint-Evremond, *Oeuvres mêlées*, ed. Charles Giraud (Paris: Léon Techener fils, 1865), 3 vols., I, pp. 60-61.

[100] Rémond des Cours, *The True Conduct of Persons of Quality*.

> the Mind intent, and eager, a thing so essential to gain Sciences, and transact Business.[101]

Rhetoric and Philosophy should not be excluded either. While the first not only instructed one how to speak but also how to carry away an audience with persuasive force, the other elevated the mind; "Logick and Metaphysicks make a Man more Just, and more Acute; and natural Philosophy, by unfolding the Secrets of Nature . . . influenceth him . . . to adore the Author of such a marvellous Composure."[102] Such a comprehensive program of study should be supplemented with "Exercises of the Body."

However, not all subjects of study should be treated with equal attention: "some are modish and we learn 'em only for Divertisement . . .," writes Rémond des Cours.[103] Whether studying is positive or negative, is determined by one's motivation. There are, according to Rémond, three motivations:

> [the desire] to be put up with the popular Gusts of vain Applause, or to exalt themselves to some advantageous Post, or to be serviceable to the Publick in Compliance with the Directions of Providence, which would have every one exert all the Powers of their Souls, and display the Vigor of every Talent they have received.[104]

The first two motives are base and unmanly. It is "better never to be studious, than to be indebted to Ostentation and Interest for the being so." Only the last motivation is worthy of the pursuit of a noble mind: it is not only in accord with the law of nature and "the genuine Product of innate Religion," but also because it can truly contribute to one's own improvement and to "the Publick good of the Community" where one lives.[105]

Rémond declares that those who plead for any priority of esteem on the basis of their birth or their advanced position in the world must, by a proportionable extent of knowledge, show that they are entitled to it. "At least," he says, "it will be allowed that the improvement of reason is highly advantageous to a man of quality, provided that he applies it dexterously."[106] The right use of knowledge is regulated by the principles of honnêteté.

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[101] *Ibid.*, pp. 16-17.
[102] *Ibid.*, pp. 17-18.
[103] *Ibid.*, pp. 15-16; see also Sorel, *De la prudence*, pp. 289-290.
[104] Rémond des Cours, *The true conduct*, p. 19.
[105] *Ibid.*, p. 20.

> . . . instead of being conceited of his own Acquirements, [a man of quality] makes use of 'em only to regulate his Mind and to perfect his Understanding. For this Reason let a Man have never such a Latitude of Capacity, he ought at no time impatiently to hale his Learning on the Stage, nor to dispute eagerly for Trifles, nor to impose his own Sense on every Body, and grate upon the Ears of Company with a dogmatick Tone ; this pedantick Way is never digested by Men of Sense.[107]

In fact, the proper use of learning, concludes Rémond des Cours, makes one a better honnête person. "The penetrating into Learning refines our Manners, inspires us with the sweetness of Address, gives us Discretion and Circumspection."[108]

In a similar way, in the mid-eighteenth century Montesquieu extolled both the personal satisfaction coming from the learning of sciences and its usefulness in society.

> Le premier c'est la satisfaction intérieure que l'on ressent lorsque l'on voit augmenter l'excellence de son être, et que l'on rend plus intelligent un être intelligent. . . . Un autre motif qui doit nous encourager à nous appliquer à l'étude, c'est l'utilité que peut en tirer la société dont nous faisons partie . . .[109]

Montesquieu admitted that studying literature (*belles lettres*) also had its advantages for honnêtes persons.

> Les livres de pur esprit, comme ceux de poésie et d'éloquence, ont au moins des utilités générales; et ces sortes d'avantages sont souvent plus grands que des avantages particulières.
> Nous apprenons dans les livres de pur esprit l'art d'écrire, l'art de rendre nos idées, de les exprimer noblement, vivement, avec force, avec grâce, avec ordre et avec cette variété qui délasse l'esprit.[110]

The principle of conformity inherent in the conception of honnêteté and requiring that no member of polite society should distinguish himself from the rest of this society, referred itself not only to formal aspects of social behaviour (excluding, for example, specialized language) but also to the existing social norms appropriate for each sex. Whereas a broad general education was often recommended for an honnête man, the education of an honnête woman was determined by the predominant perception of her role in society: as mother, wife, and a repository of good manners and healthy *moeurs*. This attitude was epitomized by the Abbé Goussault:

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[106] *Ibid.*, p. 21.

[107] *Ibid.*, pp. 21-22.

[108] *Ibid.*, p. 22.

[109] Montesquieu, "Discours sur les Motifs qui doivent nous encourager aux sciences. Prononcé le 15 Novembre, 1725," *Oeuvres complètes de Montesquieu*, I, pp. 54 and 56.

> La sagesse d'une Femme . . . consiste è vivre Chrétiennement, à entrer dans les vûes, dans les desirs & dans les sentimens de son Mari, à s'accommoder à son humeur et à son esprit, à regler son Domestique, à plus aimer sa maison que l'Opera & les Tuileries, & à plus aimer à travailler quà [sic] joüer.[111]

For that reason, the education of an honnête woman, regardless of her social position, emphasized religious and moral aspects.[112] General knowledge was recommended only to a degree that would make it possible for a leisured woman to participate in an honnête conversation (without, however, appearing savante or falling into pedantry) and that would not interfere with her traditional roles.

This attitude is exemplified by Jacques Du Bosc who addressed his *Honneste Femme* (1632-36) to urban leisured women, most likely women running or frequenting salons. Du Bosc begins with a eulogy of reading, conversation and the *rêverie* which he considers the most noble occupations of the soul. "Par la lecture nous entretenons les morts, par la Conversation les vivans, et nous-mesmes par la Resverie; la Lecture enrichit la mémoire, la Conversation polit d'esprit, et la resverie forme le jugement." Reading is beneficial for women, writes Du Bosc, as long as they avoid books questioning religion (*les livres paiens*) and they are circumspect in reading novels. Among books he recommends are those referring to spiritual life, history, philosophy and poetry; in fact, however, he does not name any, except for *Introduction à la vie dévote* by Saint François de Sales.

In the chapter "Dames sçavantes" Du Bosc declares his support for educated women. Because women's temperament is more delicate than men's, it makes them better suited to

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[110] *Ibid.*, p. 56.

[111] Abbé Goussault, *Le portrait d'une femme honneste raisonable et veritablement chretienne* (Paris: Michel Brunet, 1693), pp. 352-353.

[112] For example, Du Bosc, *L'Honneste femme*, II, pp. 41-42; Le Moyne, *Gallerie*, p. 254. See also Linda Timmermans, *L'accès des femmes à la culture (1598-1715)* (Paris: Editions Champion, 1993), pp. 320ff and 422. I will discuss this issue later in this

study arts and sciences. Nevertheless, when it comes to specifying the place of these studies in everyday life, the author does not break with the social code of the time: "l'honneste femme doit s'adonner au ménage, par occupation, et à l'estude, par divertissement." Thus, feminine education was seen as a form of entertainment.[113]

Du Bosc, like other authors, advocated limited education for women in the name of the principles inherent in the conception of honnêteté: juste-milieu and a proper balance between extremes; in fact, for the purpose of sustaining the traditional social and moral order. "Il ne faut donc point qu'une honneste femme meprise ce qui touche le mesnage; mais il ne faut pas aussi qu'elle s'y adonne si fort . . . qu'elle neglige ce qui regarde l'instruction."[114] However, he was of the opinion that "L'honnête femme aimera toujours mieux être bonne que sçavante."[115] Half-a-century later, Cardinal Claude Fleury also emphasized the "right balance" in the education of an honnête woman:

> Premièrement, elles ne doivent ni ignorer la religion, ni y etre trop savantes: comme elles ne sont pas d'ordinaire portées à la dévotion, si elles ne sont bien instruites, elles deviennent aisément superstitieuses, mais si elles sont savantes, il est à craindre qu'elles ne veuillent dogmatiser et qu'elles ne donnent dans les nouvelles opinions, s'il s'en trouve de leur temps.[116]

Following this train of thought, Fleury believed that women should have little or no public role or office and saw a woman's principal role as that of a moral influence within the family. Similarly, the Chevalier de Méré declared that "Il est mal à propos d'être savant parmi les Dames"[117] and François de Callières that "il y a une espece de ridicule à une femme, de faire la sçavante sur certaines choses dont elle n'a pas besoin."[118] Even those authors who believed that botx sexes had equal intellectual capacities argued that women

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Chapter.

[113] See also Gabriel de Bremond, *Le Cercle; ou, Conversations galantes* (Paris: [s.n.], 1673), p. 22.

[114] Du Bosc, *Honneste Fille*, III, p. 403.

[115] *Ibid.*, I, p. 34.

[116] Claude Fleury, "Traité du choix et de la méthode des études," (1686) in *Oeuvres*, 2 vols. (Paris: Lefevre, 1844), I, p. 252.

[117] Méré, *Lettres*, I, pp. 32-33.

[118] [François de] Callières, *De bon et mauvais usage dans les manières de s'exprimer, des façons de parler bourgeoises, et en quoy elles sont différents de celles de la Cour* (Paris: Claude Barbin, 1693), pp. 124-125.

should stay away from occupations traditionally associated with men. René Bary, for example, wrote that

> . . . Les Femmes, au moins les Femmes ordinaires, ne sont pas nées pour le gouvernemnet, & si elles étoient nées pour les grandes Fins, elles ne manqueroient ny de prudence, ny de fermete; Ie juge qu'elles ne manqueroient ny l'une ny l'autre de ce que les personnes qui sont capables des plus hautes Sciences peuvent étre capables des plus grands Maniemens, & qu'il n'y a pas eu moins d'illustres Dames dans les mediocres Familles, que dans les Familles les plus relevées.[119]

With few exceptions,[120] all seventeenth-century authors admit that there exists a specifically "feminine" education.[121]

Mlle de Scudéry suggested that there were some areas of knowledge considered inappropriate for women. ". . . il est constamment vray [wrote she in *Le Grand Cyrus*] . . . qu'il y a certaines Sciences que les Femmes ne doiuent iamais aprandre . . ."[122] Mlle de Scudéry did not specify in *Le Grand Cyrus* which *sciences* were inappropriate, but she does it elsewhere, and so do other seventeenth-century authors: in an honnête discourse theology, politics and religion were to be treated with circumspection, partly because of women's insufficient knowledge about these complex topics. Some knowledge of "dangerous" religious doctrines, admitted Mlle de Scudéry, was allowed to women so that they could fight these who profess them.[123] Similarly, François de Grenaille advocated limited knowledge of theology for women: "L'honneste Fille ne doit pas rechercher les secrets de Dieu auec trop de subtilité, mais elle ne les doit pas ignorer auec trop de negligence."[124] But he, too, was of the opinion that superficial knowledge harmed women and led them to impiety.[125] And since access to more profound knowledge was not an available option for women either, such views further reinforced the inferior intellectual position of women. The Cardinal de Fleury echoed this statement almost half-a-century later: "Il faut donc se contenter de leur aprendre les dogmes communs, sans entrer dans la théologie."[126]

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[119] René Bary, *Journal de Conversation ou des plus belles matières sont agitées de part et d'autres* (Paris: Jean de Couteror, 1673), vingtième conversation, "Apologie des femmes," p. 271.

[120] For example, Poullain de La Barre, *De l'éducation des dames pour la conduite de l'esprit dans les sciences et dans les moeurs* (Paris: Antoine Dezallier, 1679).

[121] Timmermans, *L'accès des femmes à la culture*, p. 355.

[122] Mlle de Scudéry, *Artamène, où Le grand Cyrus*, 10 vols. (Paris: A. Courbe, 1649-1653; Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1972), X, p. 401.

[123] Mlle de Scudéry, "De l'incredulite," *Choix de conversations de Mlle de Scudéry* (Ravenna: Longo, 1977), p. 91.

[124] De Grenaille, *Honneste fille*, III, p. 176.

[125] *Ibid.*, III, p. 27.

However, as Mlle de Scudéry made explicit, in practice it was very often not knowledge or the lack or knowledge that mattered, but rather the *sprezzatura*, the "natural" form in which it was presented, and the use that was made of it: knowledge, even quite vast, was acceptable for a woman as long as she did not appear savante and did not exceed her traditional role in society, that is, as long as she observed bienséances appropriate for her sex. ". . . [I]l y a . . . [des sciences] qu'elles [femmes] peuuent sçauoir, mais qu'elles ne doiuent pourtant iamais auoüer qu'elles sçachent."[127] In his eulogy of Louis Carré, mathematician, Fontenelle engaged in a cleverly phrased attack against the enforced ignorance of women. According to Fontenelle, Carré's popularity as teacher of mathematics to women "had some of the seasoning of mystery, for they are obliged to conceal the knowledge acquired by their minds as much as the natural sentiments of their hearts, and their greatest science must always be to observe to the point of scrupulousness the external proprieties of ignorance."[128]

To appear savante was even worse than to be one, as La Fontaine stated explicitly: "Ce n'est pas une bonne qualité pour une femme d'être savante; et c'en est une très mauvaise d'affecter de paraitre telle."[129] Mlle de Scudéry herself was a master of hiding her quite vast knowledge behind the form of an honnête behaviour which did not allow a woman to appear savante.[130] Mme de Motteville, who never published her *Recueil*, which circulated in a hand-written copy among her friends, exemplified the fear of many women of her time of being labelled savante.[131] "La femme savante" became a typical character in works satirizing *moeurs* in the second half of the seventeenth century.[132] Pedantry and the lack of *sprezzatura* were precisely what Cartaud de la Villate criticized about Mme Dacier in her dispute with Houdar de La Mothe.

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[126] Fleury, *Traité*, p. 267

[127] Mlle de Scudéry, *Grand Cyrus*, X, pp. 401-402.

[128] Charles B. Paul, *Science and Immortality. The* Eloges *of the Paris Academy of Sciences (1699-1791)* (Berkeley, Los Angeles, London: U of California Press, 1980), p. 18.

[129] Jean de La Fontaine, *Oeuvres diverses*, texte établi et annoté par Pierre Clarac (Paris: Gallimard, 1958), p. 533.

[130] Hiding one's talent or knowledge was not recommended only for women but was *de rigeur* for all honnête persons, and was first recommended in Castiglione's *Il Cortegiano*.

> Le commerce des sçavans avoit beaucoup altéré en elle la douceur de son sexe. Elle éclata en reproches grossiers contre M. de la Mothe & l'eût étranglé pour l'honneur des anciens. Le flegme de ce philosophe prit de l'ascendant sur les emportements de cette bonne Dame; il se comporta avec elle comme un honnête homme qui se défendroit des fureurs d'une jeune beauté. On dit à cette occasion que M. de la Mothe écrivoit comme une femme galante, qui auroit de l'esprit, & que Madame Dacier écrivoit comme un pédant.[133]

## The Moral Dimension of Honnêteté

The social aspect of honnêteté was from the beginning accompanied by moral exigencies, reflecting the lack of distinction in the Latin *honestus* between inner qualities and their outer display. Philibert Monet's *Inventaire des deus langues françoise et latine* (1620, 1635, 1636) attributed primarily moral values to an honnête homme: "honore dignus vir, honore ac laude dignus vir." Honnêteté was seen as a reflection of more profound qualities: spiritual and moral. Furetière's *Dictionnaire universel* (1690) defined honnête as "[c]e qui mérite de l'estime et de la louange, qui est raisonnable, et selon les bonnes moeurs, conforme à l'honneur, et à la vertu." In the *Dictionnaire de l'Académie* (1694) honnête homme figures as ". . . homme d'honeur, homme de probité, comprend encore toutes les qualités agréables qu'un homme peut avoir dans la vie civile." A dimension of an honnête person cannot be reduced to his ability to please. ". . . en ce sens honnête homme, ne veut dire autre chose que galant homme, homme de bonne conversation, de bonne compagnie." The moral dimension of honnêteté was of prime importance for the Abbé de Goussault:

> Le caractere d'un veritablement honnête homme, est d'être également zelé & respectueux pour tout ce qui a du rapport à la Religion, également delicat &

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[131] See Timmermans, *L'accès des femmes à la culture*, p. 784.

[132] *Ibid.*, pp. 227ff and 343.

[133] Nicolas Cartaud de la Vilate, *Essai historique et philosophique sur le goût* (Paris: de Maudouyt, 1736; Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1970), p. 158.

> prudent pour tout ce qui regarde l'honneur, également chaud & prompt pour le service de ses Amis, également plein de reconnoissance & d'amitié pour ceux à qui il a obligation; également plein de justice & de bonté pour ses Domestiques, également plein d'amour & de respect pour ceux qui luy ont donné la naissance, & enfin également plein de soin & de tendresse pour la Femme & les Enfans.[134]

The moral requirements for an honnête woman put even more emphasis upon moral and religious values, especially after the Fronde.[135] Indeed, an emphasis upon women's morals was a leitmotif in the writings of the period. On the one hand, women were seen as the repository of healthy morals, thus obliged to provide a good example of conduct. On the other hand, women were considered weaker than men, thus religion was believed to be more important for them to prevent them from moral corruption. In 1673 Charles Sorel wrote that the word honnêteté, when it refers to women, indicates "la discretion, la réserve, la pudeur, la chasteté."[136] In his *Instruction pour une Jeune princesse ou l'idée d'une honnete femme* (1684) Chevalier Trotti de La Chétardie emphasized piety as an essential virtue for women.[137] Furetière wrote in his *Dictionnaire* (1690) that "*honneste* femme se dit particulièrement de celle qui est chaste, prude et modeste, qui ne donne aucune occasion de parler d'elle ni même de la supçonner." The *Dictionnaire de l'Académie* (1694) echoed: "*honnête* femme, *honnête* fille se dit proprement d'une femme et une fille qui sont chastes et vertueuses."

A present-day author suggests that the emphasis on the moral aspects of honnêteté was not a reaction against the alleged excesses of its mondaine version, but resulted precisely from the attempt of seventeenth-century French authors to adapt the conception of honnêteté to women.[138] Indeed, this emphasis seems to be especially important when it came to women involved in social life. For example, Du Bosc, who exemplified a rather liberal attitude in his *Honneste Femme*, did not condemn the social involvement of women. Nevertheless he advised women to guard their reputation, rather than their appearance; "d'être chastes, constantes, fidèles, prudentes, gracieuses et point trop coquettes, ni médisantes, ni jalouses, ni débauchées."[139] Similarly, Saint-Gabriel, Attorney-General in the *Cour des aides* of Normandy, believed that there was nothing wrong in moderate social involvement of women but, like Du Bosc, emphasized that "[l]a piété, la religion, la modestie et la sagesse est le propre des Dames" and ". . . les hommes ont été obligés de désarmer devant la moralité féminine."[140] While Mlle de Scudéry was rather indulgent to libertine men, she was very severe with libertine women.[141]

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[134] *Reflexions sur les defauts ordinaires des hommes*, pp. 309-310.

[135] About different understanding of moral/sexual purity between an *honnête homme* and *honnête femme* see, for example, Roger Duchêne, "Honnêteté et sexualité," in: *Destins et Enjeux du XVIIe siècle*, ed. by Yves-Marie Bercé *et al.* (Paris: P.U.F., 1985), pp. 119-130.

[136] Charles Sorel, *De la connoissance des bons livres* (Amsterdam: Aug. Aubry, 1673), p. 5.

[137] "La piété est une Vertu essentiallement nécessaire aux Dames." Trotti de La Chétardie, *Instruction pour une jeune princesse ou l'Idée d'une honnête femme*, p. 1.

[138] Timmermans, *L'accès des femmes à la culture*, p. 423. This argument runs counter

The moral dimension of the honnête person originated, on the one hand, from the secular ideals of humanism, and on the other, from the Christian moral code. For most writers on honnêteté these two sources complemented rather than conflicted with each other and their precepts were often the same: juste milieu, moderation, and control of passions. When some French moralists of the second half of the seventeenth century declared the incompatibility of Christian values and mondaine life (often identified by them with honnêteté) they were at odds with the very tradition of honnêteté. The incongruence resulted partly from the fact that the critics took as an object of their attacks extreme cases, which, in fact were incompatible with honnêteté precisely because of their extremeness.[142] Obstacles to the practice of the Christian virtues occurred, according to these writers, especially at the

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to the "reaction" thesis of, for example, Jean-Pierre Dens, *L'honnête homme et la critique du goût*. This thesis was recently refuted also by Emmanuel Bury in his *Littérature et politesse. L'invention de l'honnête homme (1580-1750)* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1996), p. 60ff.

[139] Du Bosc, *l'Honneste femme*, III, p. 75.

[140] Saint-Gabriel, *La Mérite des dames avec l'entrée de la reyne et de cent autres dames du temps, dans le ciel des belles héroines*. . . (Paris: J. Legras, 1655), as quoted by Théodore Joran, "'Le mérite des dames' par le sieur De Saint-Gabriel (1657)," *L'Universtité Catholique* LXV (15 septembre-15 Décembre 1910), p. 225.

[141] Timmermans, *L'accès des femmes à la culture*, p. 760 and 319ff; see also Pierre Le Moyne, *Les Femmes la Modestie et la bienséance chretienne* (Paris: Regis Ruffet et Cie, Successeurs, 1868).

[142] For example, Louis Bourdaloue, *Oeuvres complètes*, 6 vols. (Lyon: Librairie ecclésiastique et classique de Briday, 1868), IV, p. 182.

court, and the conduct of courtiers was most often used to exemplify the incompatibility between honnêteté and Christian morality.

> . . . il [est] bien malaisé [wrote Jacques de Callières in 1658] d'accorder la Religion avec les Maximes du monde et de la Cour. C'est à mon avis la raison pour laquelle Jesus-Christ commande à ceux qui aspirent à la perfection de tout quitter pour l'amour de luy.[143]

But the court was not the only place where transgression of the rules of honnêteté could be found, as the Abbé de Goussault made clear:

> Quand j'ay entrepris de faire le Portrait d'un honneste Homme [wrote Goussault in 1692], je n'ay pas pretendu representer un Homme de Cour ou de Ville, qui sous une honnesteté apparente et purement mondaine, chache un libertinage veritable et criminel; mais je me suis proposé un Homme qui joint la politesse, la civilité, l'esprit, et l'érudition, à la pureté de ses moeurs, et à la probité, c'est-à-dire, un honneste Homme, selon Dieu et selon le monde, soit qu'il soit de la Cour, soit qu'il soit de la Ville.[144]

Honnêteté was also criticized by religious moralists for taking as its model the "pagan" wisdom of ancient philosophers, based on a rational approach, rather than Christian virtues, for which reason is not a sufficient guide. Consequently, such writers charged that honnêtes persons rationally chose utilitarian virtues that served their temporary interests and ignored piety, humility, and other virtues that never resulted from a rational choice, but served the salvation of their soul.[145]

In fact, in most cases the bone of contention was not that Christian values were incompatible with honnêteté on theoretical grounds, but that an honnête person failed (or refused) to implement them in practice. For Saint François de Sales, honnêteté and religious devotion did not contradict each other. In the *Introduction à la vie dévote* (1608) he concluded that, although it cannot be achieved easily, the devout life was reconcilable with an active role in polite, secular society. Although devotion was superior to honnêteté, it provided a solid basis for honnêteté: the love of God was the source of perfection for man.[146]

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[143] Jacques de Callières, *La Fortune des gens de qualité et des gentilshommes particuliers* (1658), pp. 77-79.

[144] Goussault, *Réflexions sur les defauts ordinaires chez hommes*, Préface non paginée, p. 4.

[145] Jacques Esprit, *La Fausseté des vertus humaines*, 2 vols. (Paris: Guillaume Desprez, 1677-1678), II, p. 543.

According to Faret, it was virtue which added splendour to the qualities of reason. Virtue arises from the juste milieu: it is in equal distance from both avarice and prodigality.[147] Thus, even Faret's pragmatically oriented courtier was not supposed to abandon morals completely, at least in theory. Similarly, Du Bosc considered morals most important for the formation of honnête persons, men and women alike.[148] Virtue is the source of the wisdom most useful in the world. In fact, for both Faret and Du Bosc, moral virtues are identical with Christian ones. ". . . [I]l n'y a de probité [sans la foi], et sans probité personne ne saurait être agréable." These are the same virtues which make us agreeable to God and to people.[149]

Blaise Pascal, too, believed that honnêteté and Christian values are complementary. Since the earthly life is only a transition, earthly pleasures cannot be a goal in thhemselves, and an honnête person is necessarily Christian.[150] Marmet de Valcroissant wrote in 1662 that one should practice precepts that teach how to live according to divine and human laws.[151] Similarly, for Samuel Sorbière, a bourgeois doctor and scholar, an honnête person represents a balance of moral and social qualities.[152] Being primarily a *homo socius*, an honnête homme is naturally oriented toward others and guided by bienséances, rather than by religious precepts alone. However, he tries to combine, on the one hand, "self-mastery that can dispense with civil law and worldly temptations and, on the other, sociability in terms of moral obligation to others as well as worldly accommodation to custom and manners."[153]

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[146] "La dévotion ne gâte rien, quand elle est vraie, mais elle perfectionne tout." See René Bady, "A l'occasion du IVe centenaire de la naissance de François de Sales. François de Sales maitre d'honnêteté," *XVIIe siècle* 79 (1968), p. 19.

[147] Faret, *L'honnête homme*, pp. 22 and 44.

[148] Du Bosc, *La honneste femme*, p. 335.

[149] Faret, *L'honnête homme*, p. 33. Other early theoreticians of honnêteté (Bardin, Grenailles) also insisted on personal values, religious faith and purity of *moeurs*.

[150] J.-J. Demorest, "L'honnête homme et le croyant selon Pascal," *Modern Philology* 53/4 (1956), pp. 217-220.

[151] Melchior Marmet de Valcroissant, *Maximes pour vivre heureusement dans le monde et pour former l'Honneste Homme* (Paris: Charles de Sercy, 1662), pp. 93-94.

[152] Samuel Sorbière, *Relations, lettres et discours* (Paris: Robert de Ninville, 1660), pp. 320-321.

Compatibility between Christian morality and honnêteté was also advocated by Armand de Gérard.[154] For Trotti de La Chétardie, "[t]he Love and Fear of God is the first thing a Person of Quality ought to take into consideration . . ."[155] Similarly, the Abbé de Goussault believed that an ideal honnête person was the one who combined polite manners, civility, *esprit*, education, with purity of moeurs and probity; thus an "honnête homme selon Dieu et le monde." Goussault advocated a Christian humanism in which an honnête person had double obligations: to God and to polite society; the world and mondaine life were not excluded from the dimension of an honnête person, but were not a *conditio sine qua non* either.[156]

In contrast, for the Chevalier de Méré, social values (*homo socius*) seem to be superior to moral ones.[157] Morality was based not upon an absolute, but a rational choice and on the assumption that there existed human wisdom independent from the divine. Observance of the rules of honnêteté was meant to make a person happy in this world. However, Méré also believed that there are limits, imposed by moral exigencies involved in honnêteté, in this pursuit of happiness: "Il n'y a rien qui s'accommode plus mal avec un honnête-homme que la vanité, ni qui convienne mieux, que les sentiments du vrai honneur."[158] Although Méré's conception of honnête morality has a pragmatic slant, a result of his experience based on observation of the polite society of his time, it also had an admixture of traditional morals. In fact, devotion was an integral part of honnêteté for Méré:

> Je prens garde . . . que la devotion et l'honnêteté vont presque les mêmes voies, et qu'elles s'aident l'une à l'autre. La dévotion rend l'honnêteté plus solide et plus digne de confiance; et l'honnêteté comble la dévotion de bon-

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[153] Rufus King Marsh, *The Theoretical Concept of Honnête Homme (1658-1671) and his role in Molière*. Ph.D. Diss. Stanford University, 1975, p. 25.

[154] Armand de Gérard, *Le caractère de l'honneste homme moral* (Paris: veuve Sébast. Huré, 1682), Préface.

[155] Trotti de La Chétardie, *Instructions for a Young Nobleman: or, the Idea of a Person of Honour*, p. 1.

[156] Abbé de Goussault, *Le portrait d'un honneste homme* (Paris: Michel Brunet, 1693).

[157] Méré, *Lettres*, p. 233.

[158] Méré, *Oeuvres*, III, p. 146.

> heur et d'agrément: Elles s'unissent donc fort bien . . . De sorte que l'honnêteté n'est pas inutile au salut, et quelle y contribue extrêmement[159]

As noticed by a present-day author, in his late writings Méré tended to associate Christian with mondaine morality under the term of honnêteté.[160]

Jacques Callières, royal field marshall (*maréchal de bataille des armées du roi*), who, like Méré, seems to represent the mondaine conception of honnêteté, ends his book *La fortune des gens de qualité* (1661) with the following advice: "Cherchez premierement le royaume de Dieu et toutes choses vous reussiront heureusement. Ce precepte est un admitable abrégé de la plus sage morale du monde."[161] Another mondaine writer of the seventeenth century, Chevalier Trotti de La Chétardie, too, believed in the necessity of the reconciliation of Christian and mondaine morals:

> Ce n'est pas sans raison que l'on a remarqué qu'elles se soutiennent les unes les autres. En effet, ayez de la prudence, vous avez de la justice; ayez de la justice, vous avez de l'honneur; ayez de l'honneur, vous avez de la conscience. Voilà en racourcy les qualitez d'un honneste Homme.[162]

Mutual relationship between worldly honnêteté and religious precepts was also a matter of course for Eustache Le Noble, who wrote in 1695 that: "on ne peut pas avoir une véritable piété sans être véritablement honnête homme selon le monde, ni être honnête homme sans être véritablement pieux."[163]

Approaches to the question of whether traditional morality is compatible with honnêteté were determined in practice by the principles of honnêteté itself: bienséance, moderation and juste milieu. On the one hand, the respect for traditional religious values resulted from the general assumption that an honnête person must accept the society he lives in and its moral norms. For Mme de Scudéry *libertinage* was one of the major vices, "très dangereux et très blâmable."[164] On the other hand, honnêteté itself imposed the manners of practicing religion. Louis Bourdaloue, a Jesuit preaching in his sermons the incompatibility of religiously motivated and mondaine honnêteté, himself fell victim to honnêteté when he admitted that one had to avoid excess even in practicing virtue.[165] Similarly, Jacques de Callières believed that neither virtue nor devotion should be excessive.[166] According to Sorbière, by following the principle of moderation, the honnête homme tempers excessive virtue, piety or foppery.[167] The Abbé Gérard, too, advocated avoiding the extremes "qui sont toujours vicieuses dans la Morale."[168] As opposed to Bourdaloue, however, he did not think that an honnête probity was incompatible with a religiously motivated one. Jean Pic went even further than Gérard: advocating mastery of oneself, moderation and juste-milieu, he considered honnête probity and religion complementary.[169]

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[159] *Ibid.*, III, p. 101.

[160] See: Bernardette B. de Mendoza, "L'art de vivre de l'honnête homme: Ethique ou esthetique." *Papers on French Seventeenth Century Literature* 1 (1973), p. 10.

[161] Jacques de Callières, *La Fortune des gens de qualité*, p. 357.

[162] Chevalier de La Chétardie, *Instructions pour un jeune seigneur ou l'idée d'un galant homme* (Paris: Th. Girard, 1683), p. 121.

[163] [Eustache Le Noble], *L'ecole du monde*, Préface; also pp. 37-38.

[164] Mlle de Scudéry, *La Morale du monde*, 2 vols. (Paris: Quai des Augustins, 1686), I,

Even honnête women, expected to be guided primarily by religious precepts, were not supposed to exaggerate in practicing virtue. "Ie ne veux estre ny seuere ny dissolu en mes opinions"—wrote François de Grenaille in 1639. "Ie n'instruis pas proprement vne Religieuse, moins aussi ie ne descris pas vne libertine."[170] Guez de Balzac, too, made it explicit that women must be concerned for their reputation but not to the point of glorying in their chastity: "Une honneste femme reforme le Monde par l'example de sa vie, et non pas par la violence de son esprit."[171]

Moderation in practicing virtue, advocated by numerous moralist writers, can be interpreted as a result of the influence of honnête values upon religious life in France in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries and as the essential factor that made honnêteté and religiosity compatible.[172] Honnêteté, assuming the proper measure and equilibrium, did not

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p. 465.

[165] Bourdaloue, *Oeuvres complètes*, III, p. 201.

[166] Jacques de Callières, *La fortune des gens de qualité*, p. 95.

[167] Sorbière, *Relations*, p. 325; see also Méré, *Oeuvres*, III, pp. 82-83.

[168] Armand de Gérard, *Caractère de l'honneste-homme morale* (Paris, 1682), p. 81.

[169] Pic, *Les Devoirs de la vie civile*, p. 61.

[170] De Grenaille, *L'Honneste fille*, I, Préface.

[171] Jean-Louis Guez de Balzac, *Oeuvres*, 2 vols. (Paris: J. Lecoffe et Cie., 1854), I, p. 451.

[172] This conclusion runs against the opinion of some present day authors, for example, Bernardette Mendoza, who believes that "L'honnêteté diffère d'abord de la morale

allow one to renounce completely either religion or the world. Although La Rochefoucauld's attitude to religion may be called at best ambiguous, he included an "Avis au Lecteur" in the 1665 edition of his Maximes (published under his name) which was meant to eliminate all objections of a religious nature that might be levelled against the work.[173] Saint-Evremond best summarized the honnête attitude to religion: one should be neither ignorant nor pedantic; practice religion without becoming either ascetic or devout; and find a juste milieu between an inflexible virtue and debauchery.[174] The majority of seventeenth-century authors on honnêteté advised a juste milieu between a mondaine life and religion, either through "mondanizing" religion (e.g. the Chevalier de Méré) or moralizing the *monde* (e.g. the Jesuit Louis Bourdaloue).

The idea of a harmonious coexistence between the mondaine life and religion continued throughout the eighteenth century.[175] Jean-Baptiste de La Salle's *Les Règles de la Bienséance et de la Civilité chrétienne* (1703) was probably the most spectacular attempt to reconcile what belonged to the sphere of decorum, guided exclusively by a concern for reputation, with "the spirit of the Gospel." In La Salle's interpretation, honnêteté embraced both eternal and this-worldly dimensions.[176]

In his enormously successful *Traité du vrai mérite de l'homme* (1734) Le Maitre de Claville condemned "[les] impies, les incrédules, les esprits forts et les déistes" not to

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chrétienne en ce qu'elle préfère la modération à la volonté de se surpasser. Vis-à-vis du monde, l'être pieux et l'honnête homme adoptent des attitudes opposées. Le premier désirant rompre avec la société, le second s'y intégrer et en représenter le type idéal. Alors, que l'attention du chrétien est toute entière fixée sur sa vie intérieure, l'honnête homme n'a pas de raison d'être sans le monde." "L'art de vivre de l'honnête homme," p. 25.

[173] Vincenza C. Zema Guidarelli, *The salon of Madame de Sablé: Foyer of Literary Jansenism*, Ph.D. Diss., Fordham University, 1979, p. 261.

[174] Henry Thoms Barnwell, *Les idées morales et critiques de Saint-Evremond* (Paris: Presses universitaires de France, 1957), p. 76.

[175] In 1703 the Académie Française announced a competition (*prix d'éloquence*) on a topic "Qu'on peut être dans le Monde parfaitement honnête homme, et parfaitement Chrétien tout ensemble." The competition was won by de Dromesnil, bishop of Verdun. See *Pièces d'éloquence qui ont remporté le Prix de l'Académie françoise depuis 1671 jusqu'en 1748*, 3 vols. (Paris: Regnard, 1766), I, pp. 301ff. See the discussion in Robert Mauzi, *l'idée du bonheur*, pp. 183ff.

[176] See Chartier, "From Texts to Manners," pp. 88-91.

mention atheists from under the banner of the "odieux Spinoza."[177] However, for practical use, he advocated a moderate approach:

> Restons dans le monde, goûtons-en les douceurs qui sont convenables à notre condition; mais vivons en hommes polis et délicats, en hommes raisonnables, et en Chrétiens: ne soyons ni étourdis, ni féroces; cessons d'être injustes, devenons charitables; et si c'est en trop demander, du moins que les hommes soient humains: en un mot, ne regardons le monde que pour ce qu'il est, mettons chaque chose à sa place; donnons-lui sa vraie valeur . . .[178]

For Le Maitre de Claville, honnêteté had a this-worldly perspective: religious education contributed in his conception to a peculiar refinement of hedonistic and epicurean experience. By advocating the religion which appeased hedonism, Claville placed himself comfortably into the existing political and social order.[179]

As lay Christians live in society, argued the Abbé de Bellegarde in his *Le chrétien honnête homme* (published in 1736, two years after the author death), it is not enough to be directed either exclusively to God or to society: ". . . il ne suffit pas pour un Chrétien d'être précisément un Honnête Homme, selon les idées du monde: il faut sçavoir allier les Maximes de la vie Chrétienne avec les Maximes de la vie Civile."[180] "Rendez à César ce qui est à César"—was Bellegarde's guiding principle. Later in the eighteenth century, too, lay and religious authors alike preached the compatibility of religious values with mondaine life. In fact, inseparability was advocated most often. Du Préaux argued in *Le chrétien parfait Honnête-Homme, ou l'Art d'allier la Piété avec la Politesse* (1749-50) that "Il est si important et si nécessaire de réunir dans soi-même les deux qualités de vrai Chrétien, et de parfait honnête-Homme, que sans cela l'on est sans ami dans le monde."[181]

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[177] *Traité du vrai mérite de l'homme* (1734), II, p. 181.

[178] *Ibid.*, II, pp. 258-259.

[179] See Corrado Rosso, "Le Maitre de Claville et le débat sur l'honnête homme au XVIIIe siècle," in *Französische Literatur in Zeitalter der Aufklärung. Gedächtnisschrift für Fritz Schalk*, ed. by Wido Hempel (Frankfurt am Main: Vittorio Klostermann, 1983), pp. 303 and 311.

[180] Bellegarde, *Le chrétien honnête homme*, pp. 3-4, 73-74 and 179.

[181] Du Préaux, *Le chrétien parfait Honnête-Homme, ou l'Art d'allier la Piété avec la Politesse*, 2 vols. (Paris: Valleyre, 1749-1750), I, p. 96.

The Marquis de Caraccioli, too, believed that an honnête homme should possess "toutes les vertues"; not only social, but also moral or, more precisely, religious.[182] "Il n'y a que la religion qui puisse produire des hommes équitables entre eux-mêmes, des hommes d'honneur, quand ils ne peuvent l'être qu'aux dépens de leur propre gloire."[183] ". . . on ne peut tracer le tableau de l'honnête homme, sans peindre le chrétien."[184]

> Toute personne sans Religion [wrote Caraccioli] doit être suspecte dans sa bonne-foi; & quiconque au contraire vit pieusement, ne peut être qu'honnête homme. Cette différence est sensible, & ne nous permet pas d'hesiter sur le choix. Mais si ceux qui vont sommer la probité si haut, en étoient véritablement remplis, ils aimeroient la *Religion Chrétienne* par préférence, puisqu'elle est la perfection de la probité, & qu'on ne sçauvoit être trop honnête homme.[185]

Without religion, there was no morality and there is no honnêteté without Christian morals. In *Théologie portative* (1768) the Baron d'Holbach satirized this attitude from his atheistic point of view arguing that

> Il est impossible de l'être [honnête homme] si l'on n'est intimement convaincu que l'Eglise est infaillible, que ses Prêtres ne peuvent ni mentir ni avoir la berlue, il est évident qu'un homme qui ne craint pas d'être damné dans l'autre monde ne sentira jamais qu'il faut être estimable en celui-ci.[186]

The accommodation between Christian doctrine and the worldly life within the conception of honnêteté indicates a coexistence based on rational choice rather than ideological compatibility. Religion was viewed as socially useful and so was honnêteté: both prevented disorder and disruption of the status quo. Honnête criticism of religious beliefs was accommodated into the rules of politeness and was limited to a narrow circle. Fontenelle, for example, allowed himself to shake the foundations of established religion in his *Histoire des*

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[182] Louis-Antoine, Marquis de Caraccioli, *Le Chrétien honnête homme*, p. 53.

[183] *Ibid.*, p. 64.

[184] *Ibid.*, p. 79.

[185] [Louis-Antoine, Marquis de Caraccioli], *La jouissance de soi-même, nouvelle edition* (Amsterdam: chez E. Van Harrevelt, 1760), p. 98.

[186] Paul Henri Thiry, Baron d'Holbach, *Théologie portative; ou, Dictionnaire abrégé de la religion chrétienne* (Londres [Amsterdam: Marc Michel Rey], 1768).

*oracles* (1686), but he knew that his views would circulate only among the people for whom they were meant, that is, polite society, and would never become really subversive.[187]

## Honnêteté as a Political Orientation[188]

Seventeenth- and eighteenth-century writers closely linked the idea of honnêteté with the monarchical political system. For Madeleine de Scudéry the emergence of polite society and an improvement of manners was a natural outgrowth of monarchy. She believed that

> Il est très bon que dans une Monarchie le Prince songe principalement à établir les bonnes moeurs & la politesse parmi ses sujets . . . Les cabales qui font les divisions dans les républiques occupent trop l'esprit pour penser à la politesse . . .[189]

In a similar vein, Françoise de Callières indicated a close relationship between the mode of communication and a political system: while a verbal mode, on which honnête discourse was based, was typical for a monarchy, the written word characterized a republic.[190] Montesquieu was explicit that honnêteté was inseparable from the monarchical political system and an honnête person incarnated "all the qualities and all the virtues required in this government."[191] Thus, for Montesquieu the notion of honnêteté acquired an eminent political rank.[192]

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[187] See Saisselin, *L'Evolution du concept de l'honnêteté*, p. 66.

[188] A version of this section has been submitted for publication. Jolanta T. Pekacz, "Political Correctness for Polite Society: Pro-Monarchical Ideals of *Honnêteté* in Pre-Revolutionary France," *Proceedings of the Annual Meeting of the Western Society for French History*, vol. 25, edited by Barry Rothaus.

[189] Madeleine de Scudéry, *Nouvelles Conversations de morale* (Paris: la veuve de Sébastien Mabre-Cramoisy, 1688), p. 93.

[190] François de Callières, *De la manière de négocier avec ses souverains* (1716), p. 249.

[191] ". . . l'honnête homme . . . a toutes les qualités et toutes les vertus que l'on demande dans ce gouvernement." Charles de Secondat Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, transl. and edited by Anne M. Cohler, Basia Carolyn Miller and Harold Samuel Stone (Cambridge University Press, 1989), Book 4, Chapter 2: "On education in monarchies," p. 33.

[192] Corrado Rosso believes that it means that the eighteenth-century concept of *honnêteté* lost its "universality," typical for the former century and for the Renaissance. See: Rosso, "Le Maitre de Claville," p. 294. As noted earlier in this chapter, honnêteté

In his essay "Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences" David Hume wrote that while "a republic is most favourable to the growth of the sciences, a civilized monarchy [is] to that of the polite arts."

> . . .in a civilized monarchy, there is a long train of dependence from the prince to the peasant, which is not great enough to render property precarious, or depress the minds of the people; but is sufficient to beget in every one an inclination to please his superiors, and to form himself upon these models, which are most acceptable to people of condition and education. Politeness of manners, therefore, arises most naturally in monarchies and courts; and where that flourishes, none of the liberal arts will be altogether neglected or despised.[193]

Hume went on to infer that this politeness produced two notions found in "court and monarchies": gallantry and honour. The first, understood as a demand for loyalty, was for Hume an essential part of morality; the other was a virtue because it compensated for the inequality between the sexes. In other words, Hume considered honnêteté as a natural and beneficial outgrowth of monarchy.[194]

The relationship between honnêteté and monarchy was reciprocal. The political usefulness of honnête sociability for the French monarchy does not need to be argued. Present-day authors agree that honnêteté was instrumental in the change of the aristocratic ideal from an impetuous, exuberant nobleman to a tame, well-bred courtier.[195] After the Fronde the conception of political correctness changed and so did the loyalties of polite society. While Mlle de Scudéry's *Artamène, ou le Grand Cyrus* glorified heroes and heroines of the Fronde, Erica Harth notices that,

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was identified with monarchy already in the seventeenth century.

[193] David Hume, "Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences," (1750) in *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Bell and Bradfute, 1804), I, pp. 131 and 135.

[194] The very same concept was seen as the corrupting effect of the feminization of contemporary morals and was violently criticised by Jean-Jacques Rousseau, in his *Lettre à Mr. d'Alembert sur les spectacles*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, 5 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1959-1995), V, pp. 3-125.

[195] See Wolf Lepenies, *Melancholy and Society*, trans. from the German by Jeremy Gaines and Doris Jones (Harvard University Press, 1992), p. 43, and Orest Ranum, "Courtesy, Absolutism, and the Rise of the French State, 1630-1660," *Journal of Modern History* 52 (1980), pp. 426-451.

> In her post-Fronde novel, *Clélie* (1654-61), Mlle de Scudéry was careful to include a flattering portrait of Mazarin. The characters of this new roman à clef were no longer flamboyant frondeurs but instead the more subdued guests of Madeleine's "Samedis," the erudite members of her famous salon.[196]

Authors of works on honnêteté writing after the Fronde made it explicit that an honnête person respected the existing political status quo. "Un honnête homme," wrote Montesquieu, "est un homme qui règle sa vie par les principes de son devoir. Si Caton fût né dans une monarchie établie par la Loi, il aurait été aussi fidèle à son prince qu'il le fut à la République."[197] Such respect resulted from the obedience to the laws of the country, regardless of its political system. According to Nicolas Rémond des Cours, writing in 1692, any changes in once established laws should be introduced with circumspection and by a lawful body; rebellion against the laws causes disastrous results.

> [This is] attested by the Experience of all Ages, that the horrible Ills which Intestine [*sic*] Wars do produce, are a greater Burthen on any People, than those which they may sometimes risque to incurr from their Prince, by his holding the Balance of his Government, with some Unevenness and seeming Partiality. Besides, if every sorry Pretender of Grievances, should have License to disobey his Superiors whensoever he had a Mind to be deliver'd of a Complaint, (which all Rebels suppose themselves privileg'd to do) farewel Society, for no Form of Rule can subsist on these extravagant Terms, since every one hurried by his Passions, would never want plausible Reasons whereon to ground his Plea of opposing the most lawful Powers that ever were.[198]

Rémond des Cours concludes that ". . . however they who are Cloth'd with Sovereign Authority may misimploy it, People have no more to do but to be easie within the Bounds of their Duty and Obedience . . ."[199]

The laws of monarchy oblige its subjects to obey the king and forbid them entering into any engagements that might clash with this first duty. "Therefore," writes Rémond des

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[196] Erica Harth, *Ideology and Culture in Seventeenth-century France* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1983), pp. 99-100.

[197] Montesquieu, *Pensées. Le Spicilège*, ed. by Louis Desgraves (Paris: Robert Laffont, 1991), nr 652, p. 330. In the first edition of this thought instead of "dans une monarchie" it was "sous un gouvernement despotique." See *Ibid.*, p. 969.

[198] Rémond des Cours, *The true conduct of Persons of Quality*, pp. 26-27.

[199] *Ibid.*, p. 27.

Cours, "wise Men have always disapproved these too strict Confederacies and those private Alliances that should at any time clash with our Natural Obligations."[200] As rebelling against the king is immoral and always motivated by wrong reasons, Rémond des Cours concludes that ". . . whatever Revolutions start up in a Realm, 'tis always best, inviolably to stick to the King; for as his Side is the justest, so the Advantages of cleaving to it will be the most honorable, and satisfactory."[201]

For Rémond des Cours it was not only wrong to attempt to overturn the "natural" order, but it was equally wrong to censure the government.

> 'Tis only the Effect of a giddy Presumption that spirits on tumultuous Subjects to quarrel wuth the Administration of the State, imagining that publick Affairs would roll more smoothly if they were managed by their fanciful Schemes, whereas 'tis their Duty to submit to the Laws, and to banish murmuring, and stiffle Opposition, when a Conformity to their Regulation is required.[202]

It is the duty of the king and his ministers to examine whether there are any miscarriages to be corrected; finally it is the king who is to decide any alterations.

For some writers an honnête person not only respects the French monarchy but also considers it superior, in comparison with other political systems, especially the republic. While the monarchy is an ideal political setting for cultivating politeness, the republic, torn apart by inner struggles for power, is a disastrous one. One of the characters in Mlle de Scudéry's *Conversations* (1680) states that

> . . . il y a plus de repos, & moins de brigues, dans l'Estat Monarchique, que dans une Republique. . . . dans une veritable Monarchie, les Sujets ne peuvent jamais estre Rois & il faut leur obeir, tels qu'ils plait aux Dieux de les donner; sans nous jetter dans le trouble, & dans la division.[203]

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[200] *Ibid.*, p. 29.

[201] *Ibid.*, pp. 30-31.

[202] *Ibid.*, p. 31.

[203] Mlle de Scudéry, *Conversations sur divers sujets* (Paris: Claude Barbin, au Palais, sur le Perron de la Sainte Chapelle, 1680), pp. 263-264.

Throughout history, continues the conversation, republics were weak, languid and susceptible to domestic divisions. In general, no republic lasted long, as opposed to monarchies. The French monarchy is a superior example of a monarchy.[204]

Entertainment XVIII in Ortigue de Vaumorière's treatise *L'Art de plaire dans la conversation* (1688) is a eulogy of an hereditary monarchy and its superiority over elective kingdoms. In this matter, all five conversing persons are of the same opinion.

> We must be for Monarchy [says one of them] and consider there is more ease and security in obeying one Master, than if we were constrained to acknowledge several. . . . Moreover, a King is too much accustomed to grandure to appear giddy headed with it; whereas it is but too often seen, that Citizens, who are immediately Exalted to the Throne, become intolerable through their pride.[205]

Other discussants provide further justification for the supremacy of an hereditary monarchy. For example, the presumptive heir of the kingdom is educated according to the rank which he must one day possess and this is not the case in elective kingdoms. More importantly, in kingdoms governed by the principle of succession, people are not divided into hostile factions, each hiding its real ambitions which reveal themselves only when the election is accomplished.

The legitimacy of a hereditary monarchy is presented as resulting from the Salic Law which "was never written but in the hearts of the People,"[206] and thus it is not a matter of negotiation, but an incarnation of a natural order of things. For this same reason women are excluded from succeeding their royal fathers. The right of women to succeed is refuted on the grounds that if the princess could choose a husband from among her subjects, those who expect this honour would make parties causing divisions worse than in elective kingdoms. If the heiress chose a neighbouring prince for a husband, the monarchy would fall under the domination of a stranger and would become a province of his estates.[207] Thus, the Salic Law, by eliminating royal women from the right to succeed, in fact saves the monarchy and therefore should not be questioned by them.[208]

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[204] *Ibid.*, pp. 285-286.
[205] Vaumorière, *The art of pleasing in conversation*, pp. 320-321.
[206] *Ibid.*, pp. 318-319.
[207] *Ibid.*, pp. 324-325.

The legitimacy of the monarchy and the obedience of its subjects to their sovereign could also be justified on religious grounds. Jacques Esprit, an academician of Jansenist orientation, argued in his work directed against Stoic philosphy, *Fausseté des vertus humaines* (1677-1678), that God ordained people to be born different in their condition and through this order of Divine Wisdom some are raised above others. Esprit supported his contention by quoting Plato's eulogy of the monarchy, from which it follows that subjects owe their sovereign obedience as a matter of religious duty and ". . . neither the evil Qualities, nor the severe Government of Kings, shall be any ground for Subjects to revolt from their Obedience."[209] According to Esprit, the determinations of human reason are deceitful and uncertain and therefore cannot be relied upon; for this reason the subjects should not follow politicians and their judgements, but that of the sovereign, who represents the law of God.

Similarly to the criticism of religion, honnêteté allowed at times for criticism of monarchical institutions but criticism according to the rules of honnêteté. Such was Montesquieu's criticism of French society and institutions in the *Lettres Persanes*; while he made them an object of his satire, he had no wish to subvert them.

The identification of the ideals of honnêteté with the Old Regime ideals of monarchy and royal absolutism culminated during the French Revolution in vociferous attacks of the revolutionaries on the "pretended virtue" of *honnêteté*, especially, after 1793.[210] Honnêteté was linked to *honneur* which Montesquieu had said long before was the main support of monarchy linked with aristocracy. To revolutionaries, *honnêteté* meant *fausseté*. It was now Montesquieu's *virtue* that replaced the compromised ideal upholding the Old Regime and it was the task of men of virtue to sweep away false honesty, along with the polite, elite, aristocratic society.

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[208] For a discussion about the origins and arguments in favour of the Salic Law, see, for example, Pierre Ronzeaud, "La femme au pouvoir ou le monde à l'envers," *XVIIe siècle* 108 (1975), pp. 11ff.

[209] [Jacques Esprit], *The Falshood of Human Virtue* (London: For Timothy Child, 1691), p. 248 (first published as *La Fausseté des vertus humaines*, 2 vols., Paris: Guillaume Desprez, 1677-1678).

[210] See, Anette Höfer, "Honnête homme, honnête gens," *Actes du 2e Colloque de Lexicologie Politique. Saint-Cloud, 15-20 septembre 1980*, vol. 3 (Paris: Klincksieck, 1982), pp. 884-892, and Anette Höfer and Rolf Reichardt (eds.), "Honnête homme, honnêteté, honnêtes gens," in *Handbuch politisch-sozialer Grundbegriffe in Frankreich 1680-1820*, Heft 7 (München: R. Oldenbourg, 1986), pp. 51-63.

## Honnêteté as an Aesthetic Norm

It is a common belief that the rules of honnêteté in the social realm and those of a seventeenth-century work of art based on the classical doctrine are difficult to separate. In other words, an honnête person modelled himself according to the classical aesthetic norms. According to the Chevalier de Méré, to be honnête,

> Il faut imiter la nature et la suivre en tout, mais la nature la plus parfaite et la plus accomplie; il faut observer et choisir tout ce qu'on y peut découvrir de plus beau, de plus aimable et de plus charmant, non seulement dans la sensible mais encore dans l'intellectuelle, ou l'intelligible, ou l'invisible ou la spirituelle.[211]

As a present-day author put it, "L'honnête homme a créé sa personalité comme une oeuvre d'art; après un long apprentissage, il a transformé un matériau, ses qualités innées, en un produit que tend à la perfection.[212] Or, as another author wrote, "*bienséance* in the realm of social behaviour is nothing less than the principle of imitation outside the realm of art."[213] Both honnêteté and the classical doctrine were literary in orientation and shared the belief in the supremacy of literary genres over other forms of art.

In fact, the interaction between honnêteté and the aesthetic norms of the time was reciprocal: while an honnête person was modelled after the aesthetic norms, the aesthetic norms were also modified by the rules of honnêteté. This assumption implies that, on the one hand, honnêteté was not a pure and simple outgrowth of the classical doctrine, and, on the other, that the rules of honnêteté affected works of art and the criteria for evaluating them.

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[211] Méré, *Lettres*, I, p. 223.

[212] De Mendoza, "L'art de vivre de l'honnête homme," p. 22.

[213] Rémy G. Saisselin, *The Rule of Reason and the Ruses of the Heart. A Philosophical Dictionary of Classical French Criticism, Critics, and Aesthetic Issues* (Cleveland/London: The Press of Case Western Reserve University, 1970), p. 48

Honnêteté shared the classical belief in the superiority of naturalness, *vraisemblance*, regularity, order and the juste milieu. "L'ordre et la beauté sont presque une même chose"[214] was the belief of both theoreticians of honnêteté and the classical doctrine. The language of honnêteté permeated the language of aesthetic discourse and it was very often the rules of honnêteté that a work of art was expected to follow.[215] Bienséances were to be observed not only in human relationships but also in art, and just as an exaggerated and bizarre behaviour was considered a violation of bienséances, so was singularity and oddness in art. La Fontaine, for example, criticized Lully's music as violating the principles of honnêteté by exaggerating:

> Il faut vingt clavecins, cent violons pour plaire
> . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . . .
> Ses concerts d'instruments ont le bruit du tonnerre
> Et ses concerts de voix ressemblent aux éclats
> Qu'en jour de combat font les cris des soldats.[216]

"C'est une erreur de croire que la profusion des ornemens releve la beauté de l'Architecture"—wrote another author almost a century later—"elle y nuit plus qu'elle n'y sert."[217] And just as a craze for novelty was inappropriate for an honnête person,[218] so was following the new fashion in art.

> La mode, le tyran du goût, met un grand obstacle à la perfection des arts: elle est accompagnée de la folle nouveauté . . . La bizarrerie est admise sous le nom de génie, comme si la production d'un monstre étoit une marque de fécondité . . . La mode a varié les formes et les contours de toutes les parties de l'édifice, et y a employé un mélange confus de lignes courbes et de lignes droites, sans distinction des entroits où elles doivent être employées à propos: en effet, on a employé aux Mausolées et aux Eglises les formes et les contours qui ne conviennent qu'aux Théâtres et aux Sales de Bal: ce désordre

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[214] Bernard Lamy, *La Rhétorique ou l'art de parler* (Paris: André Pralad, 1678), p. 8.

[215] For example, Abbé Gousault argued that "ouvrage d'esprit" has the same qualities as honnêteté: juste-milieu, natural beauty, etc. *Reflexions sur les defauts ordinaires des hommes*, pp. 102-13.

[216] Jean de La Fontaine, "Epitre à M. de Niert," in *Oeuvres diverses*, ed. by Pierre Clarac (Paris: Gallimard, 1958), pp. 617-620.

[217] Pierre Patte, *Mémoires sur les objects les plus importants de l'Architecture* (Paris: Rozet, 1769), p. 16.

[218] For example, according to Pascal, an honnête person was not enslaved by fashion, but able to distinguish the *modèle naturel*. *Pensées*, ed. Brunschvicg, p. 29.

> vient du défaut de connoissance des propriétés de ces différens lignes, du peu d'attention aux effets qu'elles produisent à la vûe, et d'une mauvaise application des principes qui éloignent également de la perfection et du bon goût.[219]

"La vraie beatué [de la musique] est dans le juste milieu"—declared Lecerf de la Viéville at the beginning of the eighteenth century in his book arguing the superiority of French over Italian music, and compared French music to the church of Noviciat in Paris, built in a simple style; while Italian resembled the Jesuit church of St. Louis, overwhelmingly decorated.[220] Abbé Pluche wrote in *Le spectacle de la nature* (1732) that "Musique doit se conformer à certaines règles de décence, de bon goût, de modestie; il faut que la musique s'ajuste sur la parole, c'est-à-dire la poésie, mais avec simplicité et modération."[221]

Similarly, a man of taste was superior to a man of genius, if the latter was unable to control his imagination and submit it to the rules of art:

> Un homme du génie, si les principes ne le dirigent pas, se laisse souvent entrainer par l'impétuosité de son imagination. Il ne peut guêre s'asservir aux Régles de l'Art; c'est un torrent qui renverse tout ce qui s'oppose à lui: il néglige même le choix des ornemens; il se permet des écarts; peu lui importe enfin que ces ornemens soient rélatifs à l'édifice, pourvû qu'ils plaisent. Au contraire, l'homme qui sçait régler son génie, sçait aussi créer les genres, assigner un caractère propre à l'édifice, saisir le style analogue aux Personnes, aux lieux, aux temps . . .[222]

René Bray writes in *La formation de la doctrine classique en France* about two conflicting approaches to the classical doctrine coexisting in seventeenth-century France: one liberal, the other dogmatic.[223] In the context of the present discussion, one might view honnêteté as representing the liberal orientation, as opposed to the dogmatic, typically labelled as "savant" or pedantic." While the dogmatic approach to the classical doctrine valued above all observance of pre-existing rules, the liberal valued primarily *goût* and bienséance; the pedantic speculation inherent in the dogmatic interpretation of classical doctrine was opposed to the "sentiment" of honnêteté, and the artificiality resulting from such speculation to the "naturalness" inherent in honnêteté. While the pedants assumed the central role of professionals in evaluating artistic matters, an honnête approach respected primarily the opinion of the elite of taste.

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[219] Germain Boffrand, *Livre d'Architecture* (Paris: G. Cavelier, 1745), p. 8.

[220] Lecerf de la Viéville, *Comparaison de la musique italienne et de la musique françoise*, 2e dialogue, pp. 55 and 77-78.

[221] Nöel-Antoine Pluche, *Le spectacle de la nature, ou Entretiens sur les particularités de l'histoire naturelle . . .*, 8 vols. (Paris: Estienne, 1732-1750), VII, pp. 112-116.

[222] Jacques-François Blondel, *Cours d'Architecture ou Traité de la Décoration, distribution et construction des Bâtiments, contenant les leçons donnés en 1750 et les années suivantes, dans son Ecole des Arts*, 6 vols. (Paris: Desaint, 1771-1777), I, p. 399.

[223] René Bray, *La formation de la doctrine classique en France* (Lausanne: Payot &

The clash between these two orientations materialized itself in a spectacular way in the quarrels between the ancients and the moderns. Antoine Adam writes that the controversy between the ancients and the moderns was not merely a question of rules, nor of a comparison of a modern epoque with those of Antiquity. It was a conflict between a tradition which had inspired the most noble virtues and the best masterpieces, and a modern form of life which the ancients saw as vain refinement, mediocre virtues, and false prestige.[224] It needs to be emphasized, however, that the quarrel between the ancients and the moderns was a clash of two attitudes which were both rooted in classical doctrine: one professional (savant) and dogmatic (pedantic), based on the observance of rules, the other lay and honnête, based on taste (*goût*), understood as an absolute principle, and a privilege of polite society.

Taste, it was believed, like honnêteté itself, could be mastered through contacts with polite society. "Le goût se cultive aussi bien que l'esprit . . . Les goûts se forment dans la conversation et l'on hérite le goût d'autrui à force de le fréquenter."[225] Mme de Lambert, while maintaining that taste is an innate, intrinsic quality, believed that it could be developed only through contacts with polite society: "C'est la nature qui le donne; il ne s'acquiert pas; le monde délicat seulement le perfectionne."[226] Resulting neither from the knowledge of rules, not from individual sensitivity, taste was thus a relative conception, a collective

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Cie, 1931), pp. 99ff.

[224] Antoine Adam, Introduction to Boileau, *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), p. xvii.

[225] Baltasar Gracian y Morales, *L'homme de cour*, trans. by Amelot de la Houssaie (Paris: chez la Veuve-Martin & Jean Boudot, 1685), p. 69 (first published as *Oraculo Manual y Arte de Prudencia*, 1653).

[226] Anne-Thérèse de Lambert, *Réflexions sur le goût* (Paris: Veuve Ganeau, 1748), I, pp. 144-145.

attribute of polite society (both *la cour* and *la ville*) and a mark of supreme sophistication and social position. But such defined taste was rooted in classical doctrine: it favoured a proper balance between extremes, "naturalness" and vraisemblance. "On n'est de bon goût que lorsqu'on n'aime rien qui ne soit vrai, naturel et juste"—wrote François de Callières in 1695. "Tout ce qui est faux ou confus, qui n'a ni clarté ni raison, est mauvais et doit être trouvé mauvais si l'on n'est pas de mauvais goût."[227]

Consequently, the ideals of honnêteté should not be identified with those of the modern party in the quarrel between the ancients and the moderns. Although close to, and at times identical with, the views of the moderns, honnêteté was at odds with their doctrinaire version (as it was at odds with doctrinaire views of the ancients). An honnête position in the quarrel is epitomized by Saint-Evremond who, although sympathizing with the moderns, took the middle stance between the two extremes, in a typically honnête manner.

> A gentleman forms his own judgements independently, but sheer extravagance or caprice is ridiculous; he must be independent and yet remain sensible. To display too firm an attachment to one's own opinion is also in poor taste. It is a good device . . . to pretend to be ready to abandon one's judgement at a moment's notice, merely for the pleasure of agreeing with one's correspondent . . ."[228]

The clash between the doctrinaire and the honnête approaches to the classical doctrine brought up a problem of authority: who was entitled to issue aesthetic judgements: savants or honnêtes persons? In other words, what was the major criterion of aesthetic judgement: the pre-existing formal rules or taste?

The negative connotation associated with the epithets pedant, savant, and their derivatives, discussed earlier in this Chapter, indicates that in the seventeenth century the authority of persons of quality in questions of aesthetic judgement was a matter of course as it resulted from the code of bienséances in social relations. Blaise Pascal was one of the first authors who emphasized the superiority of an honnête person (as opposed to a professional) in the realm of aesthetics; being an outcome of *la finesse* (a specific quality characteristic of polite society and acquired through an exposure to this society), a judgement of an honnête person was superior to that of a professional, who had nothing at his disposal but the knowledge of rules, *la géométrie*.[229] Pascal was concerned that at his time judgement was beginning to become the preserve of the expert, rather than of the honnête person; consequently, the wrong kind of persons had undue influence in moulding taste: "Poète et non honnête homme."[230]

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[227] François de Callières, *Du bel esprit ou sont examinés les sentiments qu'on a d'ordinaire dans le monde* (Amsterdam: Jean Anisson, 1695), p. 286.

[228] Quentin M. Hope, *Saint-Evremond. The 'honnête homme' as critic* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1962), p. 28.

For Antoine de Courtin the authority of judgement had a hierarchical structure (analogous to the existing social structure); an honnête person should acknowledge such authority and respect it. In his *Nouveau traité de la civilité* (1681), one of the most widely read books on the rules of civility, de Courtine wrote:

> When it be your fortune at any play, or ball, or spectacle, to be placed next to the person of quality, it is ungraceful to fly out into any rapture or extravagant acclamation at every passage that pleases you; you must give him leave to judge first, by attending his approbation. For though many times you may have reason enough, and it may show your Capacity, yet it will be a greater evidence of your want of breeding and respect. It is the best way therefore to forbear till that Person of Quality applauds or condemns it, and then you may fall in as you see occasion.[231]

The eighteenth century did not break immediately with the conception of taste as a property of polite society. Lecerf de la Viéville advised in his work of 1704-1706 to ultimately follow the judgement of polite society at the Opéra.[232] Montesquieu, who distinguished two kinds of taste: the natural and the acquired, mutually affecting and altering each other,[233] nevertheless explicitly related taste to the higher social orders.

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[229] "La vraie morale se moque de la morale; c'est-à-dire que la morale du jugement se moque de la morale de l'esprit, qui est sans règles. Car le jugement est celui à qui appartient le sentiment, comme les sciences appartiennent à l'esprit. La finesse est la part du jugement, la géométrie est celle de l'esprit." Pascal, *Pensées*, ed. Brunschvicg, p. 4.

[230] *Ibid*, p. 38. See also A.-W.-S. Baird, "The *honnête homme* and the Aesthetics in the *Pensées*," *Journal of the Australasian Universities Language and Literature Association* 28 (1967), pp. 203-214.

[231] Antoine Courtin, *The Rules of Civility, or, Certain Ways of Deportment Observed in France* (London: J. Martyn and John Starkey, 1671), Chapter 5, pp. 47-48 (first published as *Nouveau Traité de civilité qui se pratique en France parmi les honnestes gens*, Paris: Helie Iosset, 1671).

[232] Lecerf de la Viéville, *Comparaison de la musique italienne et de la musique françoise*, sixième dialogue, pp. 331-332.

> At court one finds a delicacy of taste in all things, which comes from continual use of the excesses of a great fortune, from the variety, and especially the weariness, of pleasures, from the multiplicity, even the confusion, of fancies, which, when they are pleasing, are always accepted.[234]

It was therefore a matter of course that *gens du monde*, exposed to all *agréments*, could develop good taste which made them superior judges: ". . . ceux qui jugent avec goût des ouvrages d'esprit ont et se font une infinité de sensations que les autres hommes n'ont pas."[235] In contrast, "Les hommes sans goût appelaient *beau* ce qui était grand, tout ce qui était difficile, tout ce qui avait été fait par un grand nombre de bras."[236]

However, Montesquieu should not be seen as an unqualified supporter of the supremacy of the higher social orders as judges of *ouvrages d'esprit*. In fact, writes Montesquieu, it depends on the complexity of a work evaluated and in some cases a mediation/explanation of the professionals (*gens du métier*) may be necessary.

> Ce n'est pas par la discussion que vous jugez de bien des beautés de Théocrite, de Virgile, d'Ovide. . . . Le sort des ouvrages d'esprit n'est guère fixé que par les gens du métier, qui ont de la discussion et, outre cela, du sentiment. Ces gens-là touchent, pour ainsi dire, la corde des organes des gens du monde et les avertissent . . .[237]

Thus, Montesquieu acknowledged a limited role for the professional without, however, denying a substantial participation of *gens du monde* in forming judgements in matters of artistic taste.

As opposed to honnêtes persons, savants were seen as having no taste. Morvan de Bellegarde wrote in 1702 that

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[233] Montesquieu, *Essai sur le Goût*, introduction et notes par Charles-Jacques Beyer (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1967), pp. 63-65.

[234] Montesquieu, *The Spirit of the Laws*, trans. and ed. by Anne M. Cohler, Basia Carolyn Miller and Harold Samuel Stone (Cambridge University Press, 1989), Part I, Chapter 2 "On Education in monarchies," p. 33.

[235] Montesquieu, *Essai sur le Goût*, p. 87.

[236] [Montesquieu], *Pensées et Fragments inédits de Montesquieu*, 2 vols. (Bordeaux: G. Gounouilhou, 1899), I, p. 313.

[237] A letter of 26 September 1726 to Jean-Jacques Bel, as quoted by Charles-Jean

> La plupart de ces Messieurs que l'on honore du titre de savants ont un mauvais goût et ne jugent que de travers; ils ont l'entretien pédant et fastidieux. L'étude engendre une crasse dans l'esprit et le gauchit, à moins que le commerce des honnêtes gens ne l'épure et ne le redresse.[238]

Saint-Evremond, although far from rejecting rules, also asserted the primacy of taste over rules in aesthetic judgement.[239] Having no taste, savants were excluded from the circle of legitimate judges. The ultimate right to judge was a privilege of those who had taste.

> Le goût et le jugement ne sont en effet qu'une même chose, une même disposition, une même habitude de l'âme, à laquelle on donne différents noms selon les différentes manières qu'elle prend pour agir. On l'apelle goût quand elle agit par sentiment et à la première impression des objets; on l'apelle jugement quand elle agit par raisonnements et après avoir examiné les ouvrages sur les règles de l'art et par les lumières de la vérité.[240]

In a similar vein, Gabriel Guéret argued in his *La Guerre des auteurs anciens et modernes* (1671) that "un certain goût de Cour [est] plus sûr et plus suivi que [les] règles de Poétique."[241]

Rules, however, were not quite excluded from honnête criticism; even honnêtes gens, who were considered the best judges, should have some instruction in the matters they judged. The Abbé d'Aubignac summarized this position in his work of 1663 on a dramatic poem in the following way:

> Il n'est point nécessaire d'être capable de faire un ouvrage pour en juger, il suffit d'en avoir acquis la connoissance, et principalement pour ceux du théâtre, où tout doit être examiné par le sens commun, mais il faut entendre un sens commun bien instruit. La raison en doit décider tous les différends, mais il faut qu'elle soit éclairée et détrompée des erreurs populaires.[242]

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Beyer in his Introduction to Montesquieu's *Essai sur le Goût*, pp. 30-31.

[238] Morvan de Bellegarde, *Lettres curieuses de littérature et de morale* (Paris: Jean & Michel Guignard, 1702), p. 287.

[239] Bray, *La formation de la doctrine classique*, pp. 112-113; see also Méré, *Oeuvres*, II, p. 109.

[240] Jean Frain du Tremblay, *Discours sur l'origine de la poésie, sur son usage, et sur le bon goût* (Paris: chez François Fournier, 1713), p. 120.

[241] Gabriel Guéret, "La guerre des auteurs anciens et modernes," in *Les Auteurs en belle humeur* (Amsterdam: l'Honoré et Chatelain, 1723), p. 21.

[242] François Hédelin d'Aubignac, *Seconde Dissertation concernant le poème dramatique* (1663), p. 224, as quoted by René Bray, *La formation de la doctrine classique*, p. 135.

Similarly, Claude Perrault claimed that the knowledge of rules pertaining to the work judged should not be entirely dismissed. "On ne doit pas juger des vers, de la peinture, de la musique, etc., par le goût, c'est-à-dire par un sentiment agréable ou dégoûtant dont on ne sait point la cause, mais par le jugement, qui connait les choses par ce qu'elles sont en elles-mêmes."[243]

At the turn of the century Jean Laurent Lecerf de la Viéville, advocating the superiority of French music over Italian, also tried to reconcile taste with rules: "le bon goût [en musique] est le sentiment purifié par les régles."[244] To acquire good taste, continued Lecerf de la Viéville, we accustom ourselves to judging everything by listening to our natural sentiment and by confirming it with big and little rules.[245] He added quickly, however, that he was not giving the priority to rules and that it was not necessary to know a lot of rules to properly evaluate a piece of music. It was not a *savant* taste, it was the taste of an honnête person that Lecerf was talking about. By denying the priority of rules in aesthetic judgement, Lecerf denied the decisive role of savants and pedants in evaluating a work of art. "Les savants sont trop loin de la nature, trop spécialisés, trop préoccupés de la technique musicale pour bien juger de la valeur d'une oeuvre."[246] Consequently, Lecerf declared:

> . . . j'estimerois plus ce qui est admiré généralement de tout le peuple. Enfin, ce qui l'est de tous les Sçavans. . . . Les Sçavans sont des Maitres de Musique, des Musiciens par état, entêtez des régles. Le peuple est la multitude, le grand nombre, qui ne s'est point élevé à des connoissances particulieres, & n'a pour guide & pour garand de ses jugemens, que le sentiment naturel. Les Connoisseurs sont ceux qui ne sont ni tout à-fait peuple, ni tout à-fait sçavans, moitié l'un, moitié l'autre . . . donnant tant soit peu moins aux régles qu'au sentiment naturel.[247]

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[243] Claude Perrault, "De la musique des Anciens" (1680), in *Essais de physique ou Recueil de plusieurs traitez touchant les choses naturelles*, 4 vols. (Paris: chez Jean Baptiste Coignard, 1680-1688), I, pp. 579-580.

[244] Lecerf de La Viéville, *Comparaison de la musique italienne et de la musique françoise* (1704-1706), p. 291. ??

[245] *Ibid.*, p. 315.

[246] Henri Prunières, "Lecerf de la Viéville et l'esthétique musicale classique au XVIIe siècle." *Société Internationale de Musique* [Paris] (June 1908), p. 631.

[247] Lecerf de la Viéville, *Comparaison de la musique italienne et de la musique françoise*, sixième dialogue, pp. 319-320; also pp. 323-324.

He made it clear what he meant by *le peuple*: ". . . un peuple d'*honnêtes gens*, un peuple de qualité, une multitude distinguée, qui frequente les Spectacles, mais qui n'y portant point de conaissance des règles . . ."[248]

It was therefore not the consistency with the rules that was valued the most by an honnête person in a work of art; art was also expected to please the (honnête) public; thus rules should be interpreted and applied in such a way as to make a work of art successful. Art could please through spontaneity and "naturalness," but most likely through observing bienséances. Even Corneille could be rejected if he did not observe bienséances in his plays, as proved by the fate of his *Polyeucte* (1643) received rather coolly by the salon de Rambouillet precisely because its heroes did not observe bienséances.[249]

As observing the rules of honnêteté ensured a pleasant and conflict-free social intercourse, an ideal work of art was the one that equally pleased polite society and connoisseurs. "[L]a plus belle chose est celle qui est également admirée du peuple & des Sçavans ou de tous les Connoisseurs."—wrote Lecerf de la Viéville in 1702.[250] Similar opinions can be found later in the eighteenth century. "Un Artiste habile & intelligent travaille pour tout le monde"—wrote an anonymous pamphleteer during the Querelle des Bouffons in 1752-1754—

> il trouve le moyen de satisfaire à la fois & les oreilles sçavantes & les oreilles vulgaires, il tâche de suivre la Nature, & la Nature n'est point si bruyante, à moins qu'elle ne tonne; c'est elle qui a montré à une Bergére dans la Prairie, & une Bouquetiére aux Porcherons à suivre de mesure un Menuet ou bien une Contredanse; . . .[251]

However, within the conceptual framework of honnêteté, art was not expected merely to please, but also to contain some didactic elements. How far art should teach was at times a disputable issue for the theoreticians of honnêteté. The Chevalier de Méré, for example, representing a rather extreme point of view, advocated that the purpose of a work of art was primarily to please, and not to instruct. The views advocating a limited didactic component in a work of art, exemplified by Méré, were reactions against a pedantic approach which emphasized a primarily didactic purpose in art, but do not necessarily mean that their authors advocated pure hedonism or that they were representative of honnêteté criticism in general, as some present-day authors assume.[252] In fact, the degree of didacticism was a matter of proper balance, that is, of honnêteté itself.

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[248] *Ibid.*, p. 322.

[249] Magendie, *La politesse mondaine*, I, pp. 146-147.

[250] Lecerf de la Viéville, *Comparaison de la musique italienne et de la musique françoise*, sixième dialogue, pp. 319.

[251] [Jourdan], *Le Correcteur des Bouffons à l'Ecolier de Prague* (Paris, n.d.), p. 17.

It was not a coincidence that within the honnête mode of criticism a woman was seen as naturally better equipped to judge; it was her intuition and "natural" taste that placed her above philologians and professors.[253] However, it was not enough that it be women's judgement, it had to be honnête judgement, that is, judgement complying with feminine bienséance and issued by women of quality—"femmes qui ont de l'esprit."[254] François de Grenaille, among other seventeenth-century writers, is quite unambiguous in his praises of the way of issuing judgements by an honnête woman, as opposed to that of a coquette, which shocks common sense and easily may turn into tyranny.[255] Thus, the criticism allowed to women was of a special kind: it could go as far as criticism based on intuition and natural taste alone could go.[256]

## Honnêteté Implemented: Conversation

An honnête person was supposed to play a social game primarily on the level of language; precisely, to master a conversation considered a superior mode of communication of polite society. In fact, honnêteté was measured by the ability to carry on a conversation. Mlle de Scudéry, who, from 1680 to 1692, wrote five books on conversation, believed in the superiority of this means of communication. Conversation was for her "le lien de la société de tous les hommes, le plus grand plaisir des honnêtes gens, et le moyen le plus ordinaire d'introduire, non seulement la politesse dans le monde, mais encore la morale la plus pure et l'amour de la gloire et de la vertu."[257] Almost hundred years later Voltaire wrote to Mme du Deffand that "[l]a douceur et la sûreté de la conversation est un plaisir aussi réel que celui d'un rendez-vous dans la jeunesse."[258] These opinions perfectly exemplify the tone of numerous seventeenth- and eighteenth-century eulogies on conversation as the supreme mode of discourse.[259]

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[252] For example, Jean-Pierre Dens, "Pour une théorie de la critique mondaine," *Papers on French Seventeenth-Century Literature* 13 (1986), pp. 29-37. Dens discusses the aesthetic views of Méré and generalizes *pars pro toto* about honnête criticism.

[253] For example, Charles Perrault in the *Parallèle des ancien et des modernes* (1688-1697) made the taste of women an argument in favour of the moderns.

[254] Pierre de Villiers, *Réflexions sur les défauts d'autruy*, 2 vols. (Lyon: Anisson & Posuel, 1694), II, pp. 358-359.

[255] Timmermans, *L'accès des femmes à la culture*, p. 175; see also Michel de Pure, *La Prétieuse; ou, le Mystère des Ruelles* (Paris, 1656-57); 2 vols., ed. by Émile Magne (Paris: Librairie Droz, 1938-1939), II, pp. 314-315.

[256] I will discuss this issue in more details in Chapters II and III.

### *Form*

An ideal honnête conversation implemented all the principles of honnêteté and the codes of bienséance, both concerning the form and the content. However, it was primarily the form that made a conversation honnête. The Abbé de Goussault emphasized that "Ce n'est pas ce que l'on nous dit qui nous persuade que l'on a pour nous de l'estime et de la considération, c'est la manière dont on nous le dit."[260] The Chevalier de Méré attested that the ability to carry a conversation was a matter of mastering the rules of honêteté and had nothing to do with formal education.

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[257] ". . . the bond that holds society together and the greatest pleasure of honnête persons . . ." Mlle de Scudéry, *Conversations sur divers sujets* (Paris: Claude Barbin, 1680), I, p. 1.

[258] *Oeuvres complètes de Voltaire*, ed. By Louis Moland, 52 vols. (Nendeln/Liechtenstein: Kraus Reprint, 1967), XLIV, p. 233.

[259] See, for example, Michel de Montaigne, *Essais*, III, VIII, p. 152; Méré, *Oeuvres*, I, pp. 51 and 71; La Bruyère, *Oeuvres complètes*, p. 206; Bary, *Journal de conversations*, pp. 9-10; Abbé de Bellegarde, *Modeles de conversations pour les personnes polies*, 4th ed. (Amsterdam: chez Henri Schelte, 1702), Avertissement; Richelet, *Dictionnaire* (1732), "Conversation"; Ortigue de Vaumorière, *L'Art de plaire dans la conversation*, pp. 5-6; see also Christoph Strosetzki, *Rhétorique de la conversation. Sa dimension littéraire et linguistique dans la société française du XVIIe siècle*, trans. from the German by Sabine Seubert (Paris, Seattle, Tübingen: Papers on French Seventeenth Century Literature, 1984), pp. 19-21. The prominent role of conversation in seventeenth-century France is further indicated by titles of literary works, such as *Discours*, *Dialogues*, *Entretiens*, *Conversations* etc.

[260] Goussault, *Le Portrait d'un honneste homme* (Paris: Michel Brunet, 1693), p. 116.

> Ce qui me semble le plus necessaire, mais le plus difficile, c'est premierement comme j'ay dit de bien penser sur le sujet qui se presente, tout ce qu'il y a de plus excellent à dire, et de sçavoir exprimer chaque chose à part du meilleur ton, et de l'air le plus agreable, sans avoir égard à ce qui va devant, ou qui vient apres. Beaucoup de gens qui font des volumes, ne sçavent rien de tout cela; comme aussi on peut avoir cét advantage, et ne pas sçavoir écrire un simple billet.[261]

Conversation was an exchange that assumed the participation of all members of a discourse. Mlle de Scudéry warned against a "tyranny in conversation" and advised that everyone should have their share, and have the right to speak in turn.[262] "Conversation is not of the nature of Harangues and Speeches"—believed Trotti de La Chétardie. "Every one ought to listen and speak on his turn. It ought neither to be too eloquent and florid, nor too starch and studied; it must be managed by hazzard, every one must paint himself in his discourse; in a word, it must be natural."[263] Similarly, the Abbé de Goussault believed that ". . . donner aux autres occasion de parler, & parler à son tour, c'est sçavoir le monde, & c'est le moyen de rendre une conversation douce, utile & agreable."[264] For the Abbé de Bellagarde, a good conversation was to be adjusted to all participants:

> Le plus grand secret de la Conversation est de se proportionner au caractere des personnes que l'on frequente; il faut en quelque manière prendre le point & le degré de leur esprit, pour s'abaisser, ou pour s'élever selon les occurrences, & pour leur dire des choses qui leur conviennent.[265]

An honnête conversation should avoid affectation and artificiality in favour of naturalness and easiness,[266] judgements (especially negative),[267] bitterness,[268] obstinacy,[269] contradition,[270] imperious tone, and assertive manners.[271]

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[261] Méré, *Oeuvres*, II, p. 105; see also Bellegarde, *Modèles de conversations*, Avertissement and p. 3.

[262] "La société doit être libre . . . il ne doit point y avoir de tyrannie dans la conversation . . . chacun y a sa part, & a droit de parler à son tour." Mlle de Scudéry, *Conversations sur divers sujets*, I, p. 208. See also: Trotti de La Chétardie, *Instructions pour un jeune seigneur*, I, pp., 53-54; Jean-Baptiste de La Salle, *Les règles de la bienséanse et de la civilité chrétienne, divisé en deux parties à l'usage des écoles chrétiennes* (1695; Reims: François Godard, 1703), pp. 179 and 181.

[263] Trotti de La Chétardie, *Instructions for a Young Nobleman*, pp. 22-23.

[264] *Réflexions sur les defauts ordinaires des hommes*, p. 52.

[265] Bellegarde, *Modèles de Conversations*, Avertissement.

[266] See, for example, Ortigue de Vaumorière, *L'Art de plaire dans la conversation*

Savants and pedants were often a target of criticism as they were most likely to spoil a conversation because they were unable to follow the rules of politeness. Claude Irson wrote in 1656 that

> . . . la plus grand' partie des Sçavants ne sont point les plus propres pour la Conversation' que c'est un mal qui n'est trop ordinaire aux gens de Lettres, de s'attacher opiniâtrément aux Speculation, et de ne déscendre pas dans les Discours familliers qui ont beaucoup de bien-seance . . .[272]

De Chalesme echoed Irson later in the century also blaming "pedants" and "schoolmasters" for authoritarian modes of conversations. "Un Docteur nouvellement venu d'une Université où il se seroit confiné, ne pourrait estre que très-incommode dans les compagnies où l'on seroit contraint de le recevoir"—wrote de Chalesme in 1671. The reason for that was his constant violation of the basic rules of honnêteté discourse. "Il voudroit tout prouver par les arguments incontestables, & je ne sçay mesme s'il ne luy prendroit point d'envie d'interrompre à tout moment les personnes qui parleroient, pour dire que leur discours ne sentiroient nullement la forme des Syllogismes."[273] The Abbé de Bellegarde believed that the savants almost never acquire this kind of politeness (*teinture de politesse*) which honnête persons learn through being exposed to polite society.

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(1688), pp. 270 and 272; Méré, *Discours de la conversation* (1677), pp. 106 and 109; "Il faut que les mouvements de l'ame soient moderez dans la Conversation . . ." Méré, *Oeuvres*, II, p. 103; Trotti de La Chétardie, *Instructions pour un jeune seigneur* (1683), p. 38; and Bellegarde, *Modèles de conversations pour les personnes polies* (1697), Avertissement.

[267] "C'est pour l'ordinaire une mauvaise habitude, et qui fait qu'on se trompe souvent, que d'estre si prompt à juger, et principalement à desapprouver." Méré, *Oeuvres*, II, p. 114.

[268] Le Noble, *L'ecole du monde*, II, p. 15.

[269] *Ibid.*

[270] "Mais de tous les défauts opposés à l'esprit de la conversation, le plus choquant est la contradiction." Moncrif, *Essais sur la necessité et sur les moyens de plaire*, pp. 109ff.

[271] See, for example, Trotti de La Chetardie, *Instructions pour un jeune seigneur* (1683), p. 38; Vaumorière, *L'Art de plaire dans la conversation* (1688), pp. 64 and 94ff; Méré, *Discours de la conversation* (1677), p. 119.

[272] Claude Irson, *Nouvelle Méthode pour apprendre facilement les principles et le pureté de la langue françoise* (Paris, 1662; Genève: Slatkine, 1973), p. 250.

[273] De Chalesme, "La conversation des dames," in *L'Homme de qualité* (1671), pp. 198-199.

> Le monde est, si l'on peut parler de la sorte, un grand Livre où les honnêtes-gens apprennent tout ce qu'ils doivent savoir; ceux qui sont versez dans cette science, ont une teinture de politesse, que les Savans de profession n'acquierent presque jamais, & qu'il est impossible d'acquerir, quand on n'a que le secours des Livres.[274]

It was not his scholastic knowledge that made a pedant unacceptable in polite society, but his ostentatiousness in displaying his knowledge, that is, his inability to accommodate it to an honnête discourse.

> Be not in your discourse fond to discover your Academical Learning [wrote Antoine Courtin], nor use Philosophical Terms, nor ends of Latine, to be esteemed by them that understand not. And of this young Scholars are guilty, that have more confidence than prudence.[275]

Pascal, echoing Castiglione, also refers to the ability to speak well, while making no effort to display eloquence except on occasions when it is required.[276] According to Saint-Evremond, the persuasive power of conversation depends on the ability of creating the impression that one had no such purpose in mind.

> Il faut autant de discretion pour donner conseil, que de docilité pour le suivre; rien n'est si terrible qu'un amy qui prend avantage de son expérience qui propose tous ses avis comme des loix & l'un air de Maistre, qui nous oste le droit d'examiner ce qu'il dit & qui veut forcer l'esprit par l'autorité, plutost que de le gagner par le discours.[277]

Similarly, "savant" jargon was inappropriate in an honnête conversation, as well as the use of the words that were old, quite new and "bourgeois."

> Les mots fort nouveaux doivent être suspects de mauvaise affectation, comme nous l'avons remarqué en parlant des Mots à la mode . . . Les mots sçavants qui sentent le Grec & le Latin doivent être suspects à tous les gens du monde, & ils attirent sur ceux qui les disent un air pedant, quand il y en a d'autres plus simples & plus connus pour exprimer les mêmes choses.[278]

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[274] Bellegarde, *Modèles de conversations*, p. 274.

[275] [Antoine Courtin], *The rules of civility*, 3rd ed. (London: for J. Martyn and John Starkey, 1675), pp. 62-63.

[276] Blaise Pascal, *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Louis Lafuma (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1963), pp. 583 and 588.

[277] Saint-Evremond, *Seconde partie, des Oeuvres meslées de M. D. ****, p. 107.

[278] François de Callières, *De bon et de mauvais usage dans le manières de s'exprimer des façons de parler bourgeois et en quoy elles sont differentes de celles de la Cour* (Paris: chez Claude Barbin, 1693), p. 140; see also Claude Favre de Vaugelas, *Remarques*

Finally, numerous writers warned about the dangers of mockery, bons mots, and making various kinds of jokes.[279]

### *Content*

Mlle de Scudéry declared in her *Conversations sur divers sujets* (1680) that ". . . il n'est rien qu'on ne puisse dire en conversation pourveu qu'on ait de l'esprit & du jugement; & qu'on considere bien où l'on est, à qui on parle, & qui l'on est soy-mesme."[280] The Chevalier de Méré, too, suggested that in an honnête conversation all subjects are nearly equal.[281] In reality, however, there were numerous restrictions as to the subjects expressed by these same authors, precisely in the name of the principles of honnêteté. Mlle de Scudéry wrote that "une règle principale . . . est de ne dire jamais rien qui choque le jugement."[282] More specifically, Mme de Scudéry criticized those who discredit their government and who speak lightly of religion.[283] She was most annoyed by those who have ready recipes on how to reform the state; women in particular were blamed for expressing such illegitimate and simplified opinions on complex political matters. ". . . [O]n voit aussi des Femmes [wrote Mlle de Scudéry], qui n'ont pas seulement assez d'adresse pour se bien coiffer, qui disent aussi hardiment leurs sentimens sur les affaires d'Estat les plus difficiles, que si elles avoient la sagesse & l'experience de Solon."[284] Scudéry's advice was: ". . . ne faisons autre chose, que prier les Dieux, qu'ils mettent d'habiles Gens au Gouvernement des affaires. . . . ne passons pas toute nôtre vie à parler de Politique. . . . parlons plûtost de Bal, de Musique, de

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*sur la langue française* (Paris: A. Courbi, 1647), p. 123.

[279] For example, Faret, *Honnête homme*, pp. 81ff; Méré, *Discours de la conversation*, pp. 115-116; Vaumorière, *L'Art de plaire dans la conversation*, pp. 44, 212 and 272; Bellegarde, *Modèles de conversations* (1697), p. 31.

[280] Mlle de Scudéry, *Conversations sur divers sujets*, I, p. 40; also 37-38.

[281] Méré, *Oeuvres*, II, p. 100.

[282] Mlle de Scudéry, *Conversations sur divers sujets*, I, p. 1.

[283] "Contre ceux qui parlent peu respectueusement de la Religion," *ibid.*, pp. 173-199; "Contre ceux qui décrient le Gouvernement, quel qu'il soit," *ibid.*, pp. 251-270.

[284] *Ibid.*, p. 257.

Vers, & de Peinture, que de Politique."[285] Méré, too, did not recommend political matters as a topic of conversation:

> Je ne voudrais parler que bien rarement des choses qui ne sont point de la connoissance ordinaire de monde, comme la politique, de la chicane et des affaires. Ce sont des sujets ennuyeux pour les esprits bien faits.[286]

In his *Art de plaire dans la conversation* (1688), Ortigue de Vaumorière also advised that "we must speak reverently of Holy Things" and that "State Affairs must be discussed with great reservedness."[287]

> We may speak our opinions touching the Government of other Nations . . . supposing we understand the Interests and Maxims of them. But when we are pleased to discourse on the State under which we live, we should never extend our conjectures too far, nor affect to appear too penetrating. . . . Persons of good sense never talk of these matters but with great modesty.[288]

In fact, politics and religion had a very limited place in an honnête discourse. Trotti de La Chétardie recommended "indifferent matters" as subjects of conversation, excluding politics and religion which often gave rise to disputes.[289] The authors who advised against such topics for a conversation argued that one should not discuss matters about which one does not have sufficient knowledge. It was the nature of affairs of state that they were very often kept secret. Moreover, government affairs were complex and their motives were known only to a narrow circle of state officers. For this reason, political topics were often excluded from an honnête conversation as "savant." For Eustache Le Noble, *libertinage* was to be excluded from conversations (as an honnête person must be pious) and political topics were to be treated with circumspection, as a matter of loyalty of an honnête person (obliged to such loyalty) to the sovereign, his ministers and "ceux qui sont les dépositaires de son autorité."[290]

As honnête discourse assumed participation of all persons involved, it favored general subjects over particular. An anonymous author wrote in 1660 that

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[285] *Ibid.*, pp. 260-264.
[286] Méré, *Oeuvres*, III, p. 119.
[287] Ortigue de Vaumorière, *The art of pleasing in conversation*, Entertainment XVIII.
[288] *Ibid.*, pp. 314-315.
[289] Trotti de La Chétardie, *Instructions pour un jeune seigneur* (1683), p. 38.
[290] Le Noble, *L'ecole du monde*, II, pp. 37-38 and 41.

> Une personne bien élevée ne vante jamais ni ses actions ni son esprit, ni sa vertu, ni autres choses dont elle peut tirer avantage; même elle ne parlera jamais de sa noblesse ou de celle de sa maison, de ses biens, se ses honneurs, si elle n'y est contrainte.[291]

Ortigue de Vaumorière made it clear in his *L'art de plaire dans la conversation* (1688) that

> Obscure science and great affairs must have a less share in their discourses, than agreeableness and diversion. For in fine, let a man treat gravely of important matters, in a Council of State or War, in a Law-suit or Distemper; where a Physician shall banter you with hard words, and a Lawyer cramp on you with Presidents [*sic*]; all this is no more a conversation, than the Brawlings in public dispute, or the Scolding of Fish women.[292]

It was not recommended to speak about oneself all the time,[293] and women were to avoid the subjects of fashionable clothes and "housewifery."[294] Charles Brisebarre, in his *L'Art de devenir heureux* (1690), emphasized that "Il faut aussi accommoder la conversation aux Etats, parler aux gens de guerre de rencontres de batailles, de conquettes . . ."[295]

As honnête conversation was to be a source of pleasure, too serious or extraordinary topics should be avoided. "[L]es récits des choses funestes et extraordinaires ne plaisent pas" wrote Mlle de Scudéry.[296] Ortigue de Vaumorière reminded that "it is variety that makes any thing agreeable, an air easie and remote from affectation, which is never tiresome." Moderation and the juste milieu is to be observed in conversations too. While one can converse on a sublime subject, it is difficult to do this for a long time "without falling asleep." On the other hand, "great interest, and extraordinary events may find their place in most conversations, provided they enter naturally and be treated of with that capacity of modesty they require."[297]

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[291] *Bienséanse de la conversation entre les hommes* (Lyon, 1660), p. 116, as quoted by Alain Montandon, "Les bienséances de la conversation," in *Art de la lettre. Art de la conversation à l'époque classique en France*, ed. by Bernard Bray and Christoph Strosetzki (Paris: Klincksieck, 1995), p. 66.

[292] Vaumorière, *The art of pleasing in conversation*, p. 6.

[293] [Anon.], *Maximes de bienséance de la conversation* (1618), Chapter 7, no. 1; La Salle, *Les règles de la bienséance* (1695), p. 169.

[294] Du Bosc, *L'Honneste femme* (1632).

[295] Charles Brisebarre, *L'Art de devenir heureux dans la société* (Paris: Claude Barbin, 1690), pp. 48-49.

[296] *Conversations sur divers sujets*, I, pp. 27-28.

Honnête conversation was not only a source of pleasure, but was supposed to have educational and moralizing purpose. Méré believed that "quand on parle, quelque but qu'on puisse avoir, il faut bien que celuy de plaire l'accompagne, mais il ne faut pas que ce soit la seule & dernière fin."[298] The combination of pleasure and usefulness distinguished an honnête conversation from the purely utilitarian mode of communication of the bourgeoisie and also from the scholastic discourse, both oriented towards a specific goal.

The very form of conversation (whether verbal or written) was viewed as a powerful rhetorical tool, more attractive and persuasive than a traditional treatise.[299] Le Père le Moyne extolled the rhetorical power of a conversation primarily because it combined elements of pleasure and education:

> Ca été encore pour divertissement du lecteur, que je choisi le Dialogisme, qui est le genre d'écrire le plus ancien, le plus autorisé, et le plus agréable, . . . et l'on peut dire que c'est une Scène civile et sérieuse, où la conversation des honnêtes Gens est représenté pour l'instruction et le divertissement de ceux qui leur veulent ressembler.[300]

Cilènie in Mme de Scudéry's *Conversations sur divers sujets* (1680) states that a conversation is ". . . le plus grand plaisir des honnêtes gens & le moyen le plus ordinaire d'introduire, non seulement la politesse dans le monde, mais encore la morale la plus pure & l'amour de la gloire & de la vertu. . ."[301] In a similar vein, the Abbé de Bellegarde believed that "Les Conversations, si l'on en fasait un bon usage, contribueront beaucoup à la douceur de la Société, & rendroient la vie plus agréable."[302] Thus the pleasing aspect of a conversation could easily mask a more substantial purpose: instructing, convincing, and persuading. Due to its subtle rhetoric, conversation could be more powerful than the formal speech which immediately displays its tools.[303]

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[297] Vaumorière, *The art of pleasing in conversation*, pp. 7-8.
[298] Méré, *Oeuvres*, I, p. 16.
[299] See Strosetzki, *Rhétorique de la conversation*, pp. 91-92.
[300] Le Père le Moyne, *Peintures morales* (1640), quoted in Bernard Bray, "Le dialogue comme forme littéraire au XVIIe siècle," *Cahier de l'Association Internationale des Études Françaises* 24 (1972), pp. 28-29.
[301] Mlle de Scudéry, *Conversations sur divers sujets*, I, p. 1.
[302] Bellegarde, *Modeles de conversations*, Avertissement.

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As honnêteté was to accommodate opposite forces and values within the Old Regime, it was neither homogeneous, nor coherent; publications emphasizing different aspects of honnêteté coexisted and were accompanied by shifts of emphasis within its semantic field, most typically between social and moral values. Honnêteté reflected changes in society and mores, sustaining at the same time the underlying structure: the absolute monarchy, and the social and gender status quo. As honnêteté was to prevent anarchy caused by transgression and to support the established social, political and moral order, rebellion against honnêteté was a rebellion against the status quo, punishable by exclusion, marginalization and public ridicule.

The two traditions of honnêteté, the secular and the religious, underlaid two versions of honnêteté: for men and for women respectively. Although the ideal of honnêteté assumed fundamentally these same requirements for both sexes,[304] and, being permitted some exposure in the public sphere, honnête woman got away with certain social limitations, in practice the perception of different social roles of both sexes determined the emphasis on different aspects of honnêteté for men and for women.[305] While vast, universal education was very often recommended for honnête men, a moral and religious one was ascribed for women; if professional occupations were accepted for men, domestic roles and leisure were for women; if courage was a virtue for men, purity and chastity was for women. This designated for women a particular role in society based on honnêteté and established a dialectical relationship between the sexes, as one author put it.[306]

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[303] See, for example, Blaise Pascal, "De l'Esprit géometrique et de l'Art de persuader," *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. by Jacques Chevalier (Paris: Gallimard, 1954), pp. 575-604.

[304] ". . . la mesme force luy estant donnée pour les femmes que pour les hommes." See Charles Sorel, *De la Connaissance des Bons Livres* (1672), ed. Lucia Moretti Cenerini (Rome: Bulzoni, 1974), pp. 8-9. On the similarity between an honnête homme and an honnête femme see Jean Mesnard, "'Honnête homme' et 'honnête femme' dans la culture du XVIIe siècle," *Actes de London (Canada). Présents Féminines*. Biblio. 17 (1987), pp. 15-46.

[305] As Ian Maclean wrote, "While the writers on honnêteté assert that women are capable of all these virtues which men can also practise, they make it clear that the social pressure on women gave them little scope for demonstration of these capacities and thus advocate the development and enhancement of traditionally female qualities, such as refinement, charitableness, douceur, compassion etc." *Woman Triumphant. Feminism in*

In practice, the relationship between the sexes based on the ideals of honnêteté put a woman in the position of a guardian of these very ideals. This role, presented by seventeenth- and eighteenth-century authors as honourable, should not obscure the ultimate irony of the situation: guardians of honnêteté, women became in fact guardians of themselves, as men were subject to less rigorous standards of propriety. Propriety, one should add, not only in

# CHAPTER II

## THE FORMATIVE EFFECT OF *HONNETETE* ON PARISIAN SALONS

> Il faut donc descendre à la ville, et regarder celles d'entre les dames de condition que l'on estime les plus honnêtes femmes, et chez qui se font les plus belles assemblées.
>
> Nicolas Faret, *L'honnête homme ou l'Art de plaire à la cour* (1630), p. 90.

It is usually overlooked that Nicolas Faret's seminal *L'honnête homme ou l'art de plaire à la cour*, published in 1630, was closely followed by another work on honnêteté, Jacques Du Bosc's *L'Honneste femme*, published in 1632-1634. In fact, this proximity is more significant than it may appear at first glance. While Faret located his honnête person at court, Du Bosc placed his outside it, in town; while Faret's honnête person is a male courtier, that of Du Bosc's is an urban leisured woman, most likely running or frequenting a salon. Not only did Du Bosc assert that honnêteté was a feminine quality, as well as masculine; he also recognized an inseparable link between honnêteté, women, and salons.

The relationship among these three elements is the subject of this chapter. I argue that the conception of honnêteté determined the way women played their roles as salonnières in pre-Revolutionary France and only the observance of the precepts inherent in this conception gave a woman entry into public life. Alternative modes of female conduct, as I will show, met with fierce resistance from society, men and women alike, and never succeeded in challenging seriously the ideals of feminine propriety inherent in honnêteté. Even if women "violated" these ideals, they did it most typically in the sexual sphere, which (especially in eighteenth-century social practice) was prone to liberal interpretation by men, as men also had their vested interests in women's moral laxity. As long as appearances were kept, the status quo was not in danger. Claims to have a share in traditional male areas of activity, however, were not tolerated.[1] Salons run by women were successful, that is, attracted guests (predominantly male) and enjoyed social acceptance, on condition that their hostesses observed the rules of bienséance appropriate for their sex. Further, the precepts of honnêteté shaped not only a specific form of sociability typical for salons in which politeness counted prominently, but also its content. In effect, salons not only were an outgrowth of honnêteté in the early seventeenth century, but never parted company with it and perpetuated its precepts throughout the Old Regime, if not well beyond that.

## The Honnête Woman Becomes a Salonnière

From the point of view of the theory of honnêteté the seventeenth-century attitude to women in France was marked by a contradiction. On the one hand, women were perceived as less even-tempered than men, more likely to fall into extremes (especially of passions, such as love and hatred), as having difficulties in finding the proper balance between them,[2] and as driven by passions which often made them act against their own best interests.[3] Women were also seen as being governed by moods, rather than by reason, which led to perversions of the art of pleasing: coquetry and artificiality.[4] Moreover, women were considered less stable than men, superstitious (as demonstrated by their alleged interest in astrology and the supernatural), and having a weakness for luxury.

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[1] Mme du Châtelet, for example, was not mocked and satirized for her adulterous liaison with Voltaire, but for her scholarly pursuits.

[2] For example, François de Grenaille, *Honneste fille* (Paris: Iean Paslé, 1639-1640), pp. 495, 496, and 441; "Les femmes sont extrêmes; elles sont meilleurs ou pires que les hommes," Jean de La Bruyère, *Le Caractères ou les moeurs de ce siècle*, in *Oeuvres complètes de La Bruyère*, ed. by Julien Benda (Paris: Gallimard, 1951), "Des Femmes," p. 53.

[3] For this reason, the Abbé de Bellegarde believed that women should not be confided secrets of the state. ". . . il est toûjours fort dangereux de faire part d'un secret important à un sexe que la foiblesse qui lui est naturelle, la jalousie, & d'autres passions sont portes souvent contre ses propres intetêts, ou contre les interêts de son parti." *Modèles de conversations pour les personnes polies*, 4th ed. (Amsterdam: chez Henri Schelte, 1702), pp. 87-88.

[4] Du Bosc, *Honneste femme*, 3 vols. (Paris: Pierre Billaine, 1632-36), I, p. 229.

On the other hand, however, women were commonly viewed as indispensable for the implementation of the civilizing principles of honnêteté. "La politesse et la netteté sont . . . deux propriétés naturelles aux Dames [wrote Saint-Gabriel in 1655], elles ont cela de la pureté de l'Océan, qui ne peut rien souffrir d'immonde, ni aucune corruption . . ."[5] Des Marets de Saint-Sorlin, too, exalted civilizing influence of women in his *Comparaison de la langue et de la poésie françoise avec la grecque et la latine* (1670). Similarly, the Chevalier de Méré believed that women were naturally predisposed to mondaine life and to the art of pleasing, and that the company of ladies was the best of what polite society could offer: " . . . le commerce des honnêtes-gens est à rechercher; mais les entretiens des Dames, dont les graces font penser aux bienséances, sont encore plus necessaires pour s'achever dans l'honnêteté."[6] One could not be a truly honnête person without ladies.[7] De Chalesme, too, considered the company of ladies vital for the formation of an honnête person: " . . . ce n'est qu'en frequentant les Dames, que nous acquerons cét air du monde, et cette politesse que nul conseil, ny aucune lecture ne peuvent donner."[8]

> Allons chez les Dames [wrote de Chalesme] d'une autre manière & avec une intention differente . . . le dessein de leur plaire, peut produire de très-bons effets. Pour aspirer à cet avantage, il faut acquéir des qualitéz d'un véritable honneste-homme; il est nécessaire, que nous ayons de l'esprit, de la douceur, & de la complaissance; que nous soyons braves, civils, honnestes & libéraux; il faut que nous ayons quelque chose d'aisé, de galant, & de noble, dans l'action & dans l'entretien.[9]

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[5] Saint-Gabriel, *Le Mérite des dames*, as quoted by Théodore Joran, "'Le métite des dames' par le sieur De Saint-Gabriel (1657)," *L'Université Catholique* 65 (1910), p. 231.

[6] Antoine Gombaud, Chevalier de Méré, *Oeuvres complètes*, 3 vols. (Paris: Fernand Roches, 1930), III, p. 75.

[7] "[On n'est] jamais tout à fait honnête homme . . . que les Dames n'en soient mêlées." *Ibid.*, I, p. 18.

[8] De Chalesme, *L'Homme de qualité, ou les moyens de vivre en homme de bien et en homme du monde* (Paris: André Pralard, 1671), p. 197.

[9] *Ibid.*, pp. 203-204.

The reasons why women were considered indispensable for the formation of an honnête person can be attributed both to what was believed to be an inherent characteristic of the feminine nature and to what was prescribed in the bienséances for women, that is, honnêteté itself.

Paradoxically, what was often criticized as women's weakness turned into an asset in the eyes of those who saw them as "naturally" disseminating the values inherent in honnêteté: an alleged feminine irrationality became a source of intuition; woman's physical "weakness" was seen as a synonym of delicacy and gentility, which made her a peacemaker, as opposed to a man, driven by the force of destruction.[10] Faret believed that "le sexe [feminine] est trop doux et trop paisible pour pouvoir souffrir des rudesses et des querelles,"[11] and "trop douces et trop pacifiques pour supporter les disputes et la contradiction grossière."[12] Gabriel Gilbert argued that "Auec . . . grande viuacité d'esprit, elles ont aussi des graces particulieres à exprimer ce qu'elles sçauent, & vne certaine douceur dans le language, qui persuade agreablement ceux qui les escoutent."[13] For Saint-Gabriel, "La politesse et la netteté sont encore deux propriétés naturelles aux Dames . . ."[14] According to Pierre-Jacques Brillon, the superiority of women in polite society resulted from the fact that "les femmes ont plus de politesse que nous" and that "[ils] ont naturellement d'avantage de mieux parler que nous . . ."[15]

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[10] Carolyn C. Lougee, *Le Paradis des Femmes. Women, Salons, and Social Stratification in Seventeenth-Century France* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1976), pp. 31ff. See also Ian Maclean, *Woman Triumphant. Feminism in French Literature, 1610-1652* (Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1977), p. 119.

[11] Nicolas Faret, *L'Honnête Homme ou l'art de plaire à la cour* (Paris: Toussaincts du Bray, 1630; Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1970), pp. 89, and 95-96.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 187.

[13] [Gabriel] Gilbert, *Panegyrique des dames, dedié à Mademoiselle* (Paris: Augustin Courbe, 1650), pp. 15-16.

[14] Saint-Gabriel, *Le mérite des dames avec l'entrée de la reyne et de cent autres dames du temps, dans le ciel des belles héroines* . . . (Paris: J. Legras, 1655), as quoted by Théodore Joran, "'Le mérite des dames' par le sieur De Saint-Gabriel (1657)," *L'Universtité Catholique* LXV (15 septembre-15 Décembre 1910), p. 231.

[15] Pierre-Jacques Brillon, *Le Théophraste moderne, ou nouveaux caractères sur les moeurs* (Paris: M. Brunet, 1701), pp. 9 and 192.

It was not an admiration for scholastic education, which women did not have, but their intuition and knowledge of the *science du monde* that made Du Bosc write in 1632:

> I'en connoy plusieurs [Dames de grande science] qui sçavent si bien juger des bonnes choses, et qui les possedent si parfaitement, que leur conuersation sert d'Ecolle aux meilleurs Esprits; que les plus excellens Auteurs les consultent comme des Oracles, et qu'on s'estime glorieux de leur approbation et de leurs loüanges.[16]

The lack of formal knowledge was, in effect, seen as women's advantage. Claude Favre de Vaugelas, in his *Remarques sur la langue française* (1647) advised that ". . . dans les douts du language, il vaut mieux consulter les femmes et ceux qui n'ont point étudié . . . parce qu'ils vont tout droit à ce qu'ils ont accoutumé de lire ou d'entendre lire."[17] Saint-Gabriel also considered women's lack of scholastic knowledge as one of their merits, compensated by their unspoiled intuition, a "more penetrating imagination" and sensitivity than that of men, which made them superior in comprehension and evaluation of works of art, as well as "natural" experts in matters of good taste, language and proper social behaviour.[18]

In a similar vein, Jacques de Callières argued that the company of women was indispensable for an accommodation of scholarly knowledge into honnête discourse. As women had only a general and rather superficial education, argued de Callières, their presence implied that the discourse be maintained at an accessible level, thus "purged" of a savant and pedantic flavour of academic learning.

> En vérité parmy l'ignorance de ce sexe [feminine] les plus sçavants prennent de tres-utiles leçons [argued de Caillières]; il semble que la Nature ne l'ait pas fait seulement pour plaire, mais encor pour donner des regles au nostre de se rendre agreable.[19]

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[16] Du Bosc, *L'honneste femme*, I, p. 273.

[17] Claude Favre de Vaugelas, *Remarques sur la langue françoise* (Paris: A. Courbé, 1647).

[18] Saint-Gabriel, *Mérite des dames*, p. 38.

[19] Jacques de Callières, *La Fortune des gens de qualité et des gentilshommes particuliers enseignant l'art de vivre à la cour suivant les maximes de la politique et de la morale* (Paris: Estienne Loyson, 1661), p. 302.

The Abbé Morvan de Bellegarde, for his part, averred the uselessness of formal knowledge, not accessible to a lay audience, and emphasized the role of conversations with women in making it accessible.

> Il ne sert de rien de savoir beaucoup, si l'on ne s'exprime aisément & de bonne grace, ni d'avoir l'esprit rempli d'une infinité de choses mêlées confusément dans la mémoire, si l'on ne possede l'art & le talent de les développer à propos."

He, too, emphasized the indispensable role of women in giving formal knowledge simplicity and clarity.

> La bonne grace, la contenance, l'action, le geste, ne façonnent point dans un Cabinet ou parmi des Pédans. . . . le discernement du Pédantisme d'avec la science des honnêtes-gens, . . . s'apprend mieux dans la Conversation des femmes spirituelles que par le secours des Livres.[20]

It was this perception of the role of ladies that made Somaize write in his *Le Grand Dictionnaire des Pretieuses* (1661) that "Pour les femmes, il est certain que, si les hommes font quelque chose pour leur gloire, ce sont elles qui donnent le prix aux choses et qui mettent les ouvrages en réputation."[21] De Pure echoed him in 1668: "Pour les règles de l'Art, ce sont les dames qui aujourd'hui décident du mérite de ces choses."[22] The *Mercure galant* of June 1677 confirmed that "la plupart de nos illustres de l'Académie Française ne dédaignent pas de la consulter [Mme de La Sablière] sur leur ouvrages avant que de les donner au public." The Duc de La Rochefoucauld, along with literary men born outside of the traditional nobility, such as Pascal, Racine, Molière, La Fontaine and

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[20] Jean-Baptiste Morvan de Bellegarde, *Modèles de conversations pour les personnes polies*, 4th ed. (Amsterdam: chez Henri Schelte, 1702), pp. 228-229. For the discussion about the importance of conversation with women for the formation of an honnête person see also Linda Timmermans, *L'accès des femmes à la culture (1598-1715)* (Paris: Éditions Champion, 1993), pp. 142-143.

[21] Antoine Baudeau, Sieur de Somaize, *Le Grand Dictionnaire des Prétieuses, Historique, Poëtique, Géographique, Cosmographique et Armoirique* . . . (1661), 2 vols., ed. by Ch.-L. Livet (Paris: P. Jannet, 1856), I, p. 240.

[22] Michel de Pure, *Idée des spectacles anciens et nouveaux* (Paris: M. Brunet, 1668), p. 318.

Boileau (to mention only the most important writers) were reported as attending Parisian salons and reading their works there prior to publication.[23]

Authors who praised the beneficial influence of women both for the manners of polite society and for the evaluation of literary works clearly had honnête women in mind, that is, women conforming to the rules of conduct acceptable by the society, primarily to the bienséances of their sex. The judgements issued by them, too, were expected to conform to the rules of honnêteté. Honnêteté was what society expected from women and it was only an honnête woman who could "donne[r] aux autres de continuels precepts d'honnêsteté."[24] Hundred years later, an immensely popular author, Le Maitre de Claville, also expected women to give men lessons of modesty and simplicity.[25]

In one chapter of his *Modes de conversations*, entitled "Si le commerce des Femmes est utile à un jeune homme qui commence à éntrer dans le monde," the Abbé de Bellegarde emphasized the beneficial influence of honnête ladies on the morals of opposite sex: they can inspire good feelings (*bons sentimens*) in a young man, they can intimidate him from exercising licentious behaviour in their presence, they can prevent him from indulging in too liberal discourse, and can provide polish to his manners and language. At the same time, however, Bellegarde made it explicit that women can have both a beneficial and a corrupting influence upon men and that he had in mind respectable ladies, either because of their rank or merit. He ended the chapter with a warning: "il faut éviter, comme la peste, les femmes libertines qui deshonorent leur sexe, & qui ont secoüé le joug de la modestié & de la pudeur."[26] The Abbé Goussault, too, emphasized the positive influence of honnête ladies:

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[23] For example, the salon of Mme de Plessis-Guénégaud played a leading role in diffusing Pascal's *Provinciales* (See: Pierre Rapin, *Mémoires*, ed. L. Aubineau, 3 vols. ([no place of publication] Gregg International Publishers, 1972, II, pp. 367 and 375); La Rochefoucault read his *Maximes* for the first time in the salon of Mlle de Scudéry.

[24] De Grenaille, *L' Honneste fille*, I, p. 262.

[25] Charles-François Nicolas Le Maitre de Claville, *Traité du vrai mérite considéré dans tous les âges dans toutes les conditions* (1734), 4th ed. (Paris: Nyon fils, 1740).

[26] Bellegarde, *Modèles de conversations pour les personnes polies*, pp. 222-237. In a similar vein David Hume praised the beneficial influence of women in the mid-eighteenth century: "What better school for manners than the company of virtuous women, where the mutual endeavour to please must insensibly polish the mind, where

> il y a aujourd'huy tant de Dames distinguées par leur vie exemplaire, qu'un peu de conversation avec elle fait plus d'effet qu'un Sermon d'une heure. . . C'est une bonne école pour un jeune homme, que la maison d'une Dame de ce caractere; Il y prend l'esprit d'un honneste homme, d'un homme qui ne pense qu'à se faire de loüables habitudes, d'un homme enfin qui veut ressembler aux gens de merite & de distinction qu'il y trouve.[27]

Why is it so? Because women have "esprit, douceur, égalité de leur humeur, modestie, vertu, civility."[28] In sum, Goussault believed, "Rien n'est plus capable de rendre un homme sage qu'une femme sage . . ."[29]

Women were then expected to give men lessons of good manners and healthy moeurs. Such an expectation imposed specific demands on women who ventured to expand their traditional domestic roles by organizing social gatherings. In fact, this activity was sometimes encouraged, as it was considered a means of dissemination by (honnête) women of the civilizing and moral values inherent in honnêteté. Du Bosc, for example, not only did not condemn the social involvement of women but believed that "il n'est pas besoin d'estre farouche(s) pour estre virtueuse(s)." However, his encouragement was valid only as long as women did not violate the rules of bienséance. Women were desirable company, not by the virtue of their contribution to the subject of conversation, as much as by their being able to impose restrictions if a conversation was becoming unruly. "Elles [les femmes] sont bien ayses de regner dans la Compagnies," wrote Du Bosc, "mais c'est plutost pour leur retenuë, que pour des discours vagues ou dissolus."[30] In a similar vein Mlle de Scudéry (under the name of Sapho) answered a question posed by one of the characters in her *Artamène, ou le Grand Cyrus*: "Mais à quoy leur sert de sçavoir ce qu'elles [femmes] n'oseroient montrer? reprit Phylire; il leur

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the example of the female softness and modesty must communicate itself to their admirers, where the delicacy of that sex puts every one on his guard, lest he give offence by any breach of decency?" "Of the Rise and Progress of the Arts and Sciences," in *Essays and Treatises on Several Subjects*, 2 vols. (Edinburgh: Bell and Bradfute, 1804), I, p. 138.

[27] Abbé de Goussault, *Réflexions sur les défauts ordinaires des hommes et sur leur bonne qualitez* (Paris: chez la veuve M. Guerout, 1692), pp. 250 and 258.

[28] *Ibid.*, pp. 259-260.

[29] *Ibid.*, p. 263.

[30] Du Bosc, *L'honneste femme*, III, p. 75.

sert, replique Sapho, à entendre ce que de plus sçavans qu'elles disent, & à en parler mesme à propos, sans en parler pourtant comme les Liures en parlent: mais seulement comme si le simple sens naturel, leur faisoit comprendre les choses dont il s'agit."[31] Thus, it was not their lack of knowledge that prevented women from taking part in a conversation requiring such knowledge, but the rules of feminine bienséance. René Bary, a royal historiographer, wrote in his *Journal de conversation* that "quand les sujects appartiennent à quelque Science, alors les Dames n'interviennent qu'en passant . . ."[32] Rather than to participate in an intellectual exchange, women were expected to guide the conversation tactfully.[33]

## The Salonnière as an Ideal of Social Conduct[34]

### *The Marquise de Rambouillet (1588-1665)*

Women were not the only ones to organize regular social meetings in private homes in seventeenth-century Paris. In fact, as one author demonstrated, there were about two dozen exclusively male literary circles in Paris between 1600 and 1660.[35] Giles Ménage, for example, received his friends on Wednesdays (*mercuriales*): Chapelain, Furetière,

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[31] Mlle de Scudéry, *Artamène, ou le Grand Cyrus, 10 vols.* (Paris, 1656; Genève: Slatkine, 1972), X, p. 402.

[32] René Bary, *Journal de conversations ou des plus belles matières sont agitées de part et d'autres* (Paris: Jean de Couterot, 1673), p. 8.

[33] Erica Harth, discussing the discursive spaces in the seventeenth century (academy, conférence and salon) arrives at a similar conclusion: "The ruelle which houses esprit, can conserve its integrity only if it remains a separate, feminine social and intellectual space." *Cartesian Women. Versions and Subversions of Rational Discourse in the Old Regime* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1992), p. 39.

[34] A version of this section has been published. Jolanta T. Pekacz, "Salon Women as Ideals of Social Conduct in Seventeenth-Century France." *Memory, History and Critique. European Identity at the Millenium. Selected Proceedings of the 5th International ISSEI Conference at the University for Humanist Studies, Utrecht, The Netherlands, 1996.* Edited by Frank Brinkhuis and Sascha Talmor (CD-ROM, MIT Press, Cambridge, U.S.A., 1997).

[35] Joséphine de Boer, "Men's Literary Circles in Paris, 1600-1660," *Publications of the Modern Language Association of America* 53 (1938), pp. 730-780.

Conrart, Sarrazin, and Pellisson were the members of the group. Guillaume de Lamoignon, the first president of the Parlement of Paris, formed an all-male "academy" in 1667 which met at his house every Monday from five to seven.[36] Neither was the marquise de Rambouillet, usually credited with setting a model for salon meetings in Paris from the 1610s to the mid-1640s, the first to introduce such gatherings in the French capital.[37] However, it was not male literary circles, but women's salons that were perceived as centres of honnêteté and it was from the marquise de Rambouillet that the Parisian salon became the epitome of such a centre.

The marquise, discouraged by the coarse manners at the French court at that time, resolved to create an independent space for conversations, entertainment and the cultivation of honnête manners meant to dignify relations between the sexes. She succeeded, and through the *chambre bleue* of the hôtel de Rambouillet passed the élite of contemporary French society.[38] As becomes clear from numerous contemporary eulogies, the success of the marquise can be attributed to the fact that she incarnated the ideal of an honnête salon hostess. Guez de Balzac praised her for good sense and modesty, in contrast to "femmes savantes."[39] In the "Discours de la conversation des Romains," as an ultimate compliment he attributed to the marquise the essential values of her Roman ancestors: "La magnanimité des Césars et des Scipions, . . . l'honnesteté des Livies et des Cornélies."[40] Mlle de Scudéry, for her part, included a eulogy of the marquise (under the name of Cléomire) in the *Artamène, ou Le Grand Cyrus*: "On voit mesme en la [Cléomire] voyant seulement, que toutes ses passions sont soûmises à raison, & ne font point de guerre intestine dans son coeur . . . ainsi Cléomire estant tousiours esgallement tranquille, est tousiours esgallement belle."[41] Moreover, Mlle de Scudéry emphasized the modesty of the marquise's demeanour in not letting her extensive knowledge obtrude into the salon.[42] Other seventeenth-century authors, too, shared the enthusiasm for the salon de Rambouillet.[43]

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[36] This group, Cartesian in sympathy, was comprised of both Jesuits and Jansenists: Rapin, Boileau, Bouhours, Pellisson, Bourdaloue, Huet, Ménage, Guy Patin and his son, Bossuet, and many other *gens de robe*. See: Philip John Yarrow, *A Literary History of France: The Seventeenth Century* (London: Benn and New York: Barnes & Noble, 1967), p. 199.

[37] The predecessors of Mme de Rambouillet included Marguerite de France, Jean de Morel, Marguerite de Valois, Monsieur and Mme de Villeroy, as well as Monsieur and Mme de Retz. However, the salon of Mme de Rambouillet was a protest against sixteenth-century French culture, rather than its outgrowth. See L. Clark Keating, *Studies on the Literary Salon in France, 1550-1615* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1941; New York: Kraus Reprint Co., 1969).

[38] Among the habitual guests of the salon de Rambouillet were professional literary men: Vincent Voiture, Jean-Louis Guez de Balzac, Georges de Scudéry, Jean Chapelain, François de Malherbe, Honoré de Bueil de Racan, Jean Ogier de Gombauld, Jean François Sarasin, Duc de Le Rochefoucauld, George de Scudéry, Valentin Conrart; the clergy, including the Abbé Arnould; politicians, such as Richelieu, Condé, and Montausier; as well as a circle of leisured nobility and cultured women.

[39] Jean-Louis Guez de Balzac, *Oeuvres*, 2 vols. (Paris: J. Lecoffre et Cie, 1854), I, p.

While the marquise de Rambouillet was the subject of praise, the favourite target of contemporary criticism was the salon of Charlotte des Ursins, vicomtesse d'Auchy, or precisely, her *assemblées academiques*, an imitation of the Académie Française, which she introduced in 1638. Jean Chapelain, for example, contrasted the pedantry of the salon of the vicomtesse d'Auchy with the good sense of that of the marquise de Rambouillet. As opposed to the vicomtesse, wrote Chapelain, "On n'y parle point sçavament [chez la marquise], mais on y parle raisonnablement et il n'y a lieu au monde où il y ait plus de bon sens et moins de pédanterie. . . . l'hostel de Ramb[ouillet] est l'antipathe de hostel d'Ochy . . .'"[44] On another occasion Chapelain wrote to Balzac that

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[40] *Ibid.*, p. 238.

[41] Mlle de Scudéry, *Artamène, ou Le Grand Cyrus*, VII, p. 297.

[42] *Ibid.*, p. 493. In a similar vein Balzac wrote about Mme des Loges that she was an epitome of the style "naturel" and "français" (in *Lettres de Jean Chapelain de l'Académie Française*, II, p. 876) and Saint Simon wrote about Mme de Sévigné: "Elle savait extrêmement de toutes choses sans vouloir jamais paraitre savoir rien" (see J.-E. Fidao-Justiniani, *L'esprit classique et la préciosité au XVIIe siècle* (Paris: Auguste Picard, 1914), n. on p. 48).

[43] See, for example, François Tallement des Réaux, *Historiettes*, ed. by Antoine Adam, 2 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1960-61); Mme de Motteville, *Mémoires* (Paris: Didier, 1857), p. 250; Vincent de Voiture, *Lettres*, 2 vols., ed. by Octave Uzanne (Paris: Librairie des Bibliophiles, 1880). Mme de Rambouillet was not the only women whose salon was praised by seventeenth-century authors (e.g. Mme des Loges was among those highly appreciated), but eulogies of her salon by far surpassed (in number and tone) that of other Parisian salons of the time.

[44] Chapelain to Balzac, 22 March, 1638, in *Lettres de Jean Chapelain de l'Académie*

> Dans cette academie femelle, les femmes n'y font que recevoir, et les hommes y donnent tousjours. Elles y sont juges des matières et tiennent la place en ce lieu qu'elles tiennes dans les carouzels. Il y a foule de principiants et tout est bon pour l'appétit de ces fées qui, la plupart, ont beaucoup d'age et peu de sens. C'est une des nouveautés ridicules de ce temps.[45]

If Chapelain was at times too savant by the standards of the salon de Rambouillet, he resented the salon d'Auchy and refused to take part in its meetings.[46] Balzac, too, declared in one of his letters that "Il y a longtemps que je me suis déclaré contre cette pédanterie de l'autre sexe, et que j'ay dir que je souffrirois plus volontiers une femme qui a de la barbe, qu'une femme qui fait la sçavante . . ."[47]

As suggested by a present-day author, the success of the salon of the marquise de Rambouillet, as opposed to that of the vicomtesse d'Auchy, can be attributed to the focus of its interests on literary questions and language allowing for a lighter and more entertaining tone, while the salon d'Auchy was oriented exclusively towards serious critical reflexion and philosophy. Whereas in the salon d'Auchy the savants were treated and behaved like savants, in the salon de Rambouillet they were treated and behaved like mondains.[48] However, as the guests of both the marquise and the vicomtesse were to a large extent the same (in fact, the list of guests of the salon de Rambouillet included more savants than that of d'Auchy), the difference between these two salons that mattered for the contemporaries was not so much in the content as it was in the form. Whereas the marquise was careful that her salon did not appear savant,[49] the vicomtesse did not seem to care: by assuming the role of the *femme savante*, publishing under her own name,[50]

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*Française*, I, pp. 215-216.

[45] Chapelain to Balzac, 7 April, 1638, *Ibid.*, I, p. 222.

[46] For criticism of the vicomtesse d'Auchy, see for example, Tallemant des Réaux, *Historiettes*, I, pp. 132-137.

[47] As quoted in *Lettres de Jean Chapelain de l'Académie Française*, I, pp. 215-216, n. 5.

[48] Timmermans, *L'accès des femmes à la culture*, pp. 79-80.

[49] As explicitly stated by seventeenth-century writers, such as Mlle de Scudéry. "Elle sait presque toutes choses sans faire la savante." *Conversations sur divers sujets*, 2 vols. (Paris: C. Barbin, 1680), II, p. 626.

[50] In 1634 she published *Homélies sur saint Paul*, which she most likely did not write,

establishing a *sénat feminin* (an equivalent of an academy, a traditionally male domain), and playing the role of arbitress of literary and philosophical works, she not only violated the bienséance of the feminine sex, but also honnêteté in general. It was acceptable for ladies to issue opinions about literature and works of art through the "cercles de la Politesse," but not through the *Académie d'erreur*, as was demonstrated by contemporary attacks against the *Académie* of the vicomtesse d'Auchy.[51]

Although it may appear to be the case, the criticism of the intellectual pursuits of women was not a men's plot to fence women off from non-womanly activities. Maybe it was the marquise de Rambouillet herself who initiated the criticism of the intellectual pursuits of women, when she wrote in one her letters of the "griffonneuse Sapho" [Mlle de Scudéry].[52] Eighteenth-century salonnières followed suit, as I demonstrate later in this chapter.

Unsuccessful attempts to stretch the limits of feminine propriety, exemplified by the vicomtesse d'Auchy, was a warning to many future salonnières, such as Mlle de Scudéry, who, although sympathetic to the idea of intellectual gatherings, were careful not to be labelled *savantes*.[53] Women should seek social promotion within the existing

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with an engraving on a frontispiece of herself presenting her book to the Virgin. Timmermans, *L'accès des femmes à la culture*, p. 72, n. 63.

[51] Grenaille, *Honneste fille*, III, pp. 77-78; Chpelain, *Lettres de Jean Chapelain del'Académie Française*, I, p. 216. vicomtesse d'Auchy was not the only salon woman in Paris perceived as pursuing illegitimate intellectual pursuits. Marie le Jars de Gournay, for example, whose very academic salon included some of the most distinguished men of the early part of the century, suffered ridicule that ranged from verbal slurs to nasty practical jokes. See Harth, *Cartesian Women*, p. 28.

[52] Antoine Adam, *Littérature française. L'age classique, I: 1624-1660* (Paris: Arthaud, 1968), I, p. 39; Mme Cornuel, too, made vicious remarks about Mlle de Scudéry's literary pursuits: "Elle était destinée par la Providence à barbouiller du papier, puisqu'elle suait l'encre par tous les pores." See Barbara Krajewska, *Du coeur à l'esprit. Mademoiselle de Scudéry et ses samedis* (Paris: Éditions Kimé, 1993), pp. 104-105, quoted after E. Crépet, *Le Trésor épistolier de la France*, Paris: Hachette, 1865).

[53] Incomprehensibly, many literary historians have treated Mlle de Scudéry as a proverbial example of a précieuse, although there exists only one seventeenth-century text in which she is called a précieuse, as demonstrated by Y. Fukui, *Raffinement précieux dans la poésie française du XVIIe siècle* (Paris: A. G. Nizet, 1964), pp. 17-23 and 28; see also Henri Cottez, "Sur Molière et Mademoiselle de Scudéry," *Revue d'histoire de la Philosophie et d'histoire de la civilisation* (Oct.-Dec. 1943), pp. 340-364.

status quo, believed Mlle de Scudéry, that is, through conforming to the reality (bienséances), rather than rebelling against it, as did the vicomtesse d'Auchy.[54]

By the end of the 1640s the salon de Rambouillet ceased to exist, but the example set by the marquise found numerous followers: Mme de Sablé, Mme de Sablière, and Mlle de Scudéry, were joined by many other Parisian women. In 1646 François de Soucy, sieur de Gerzan, wrote that "Paris est maintenent tout remply de Dames, soit à la Cour ou d'ailleurs, qui accordent très-iudicieusement et delicatement, la science auec l'eloquence, les Muses auec le Graces, et l'Art avec la Nature."[55] Antoine Somaize, in his *Le Grand Dictionnaire des Prétieuses* (1661), listed as many as 251 salons in Paris.[56]

The salons not only multiplied, but also differed from that of the marquise de Rambouillet. The death of Cardinal Richelieu in December of 1642 marked "la fin du régime despotique," as one author put it,[57] and a noticeable caesura in forms and standards of social life: a period of weakness of the absolute monarchy and laxity of manners. In the eyes of some seventeenth-century writers, in many of these salons a refined gallantry and the pursuit of linguistic sublimation, set by the marquise de Rambouillet, turned into mannerisms and pretentiousness. In fact, contemporary criticism indicated that an alternative mode of salon sociability emerged at that time: a mode which broke with the equilibrium of the honnête salon epitomized by the hôtel de Rambouillet, by emphasizing a central role for the salonnière. By breaking with honnêteté, the new salon threatened the traditional order of things: moral and social in the first place.

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[54] Similarly, it was not so much a social position (nobility) that legitimized salons run by women, but these women's adherence to the rules of bienséance/propriety.

[55] François Du Soucy, sieur de Gerzan *Le Triomphe des dames. Dédié à Son Altesse Royale Mademoiselle* (Paris, chez l'auteur, 1646), pp. 134-135.

[56] The term *précieuse*, used in a pejorative way in the early 1650s to describe pretentious Parisian salonnières, gradually lost its negative connotation and Somaize means by it all women holding salons.

[57] Maurice Magendie, *La politesse mondaine et les théories de l'honnêteté en France au XVIIe siècle, de 1600 à 1660*, 2 vols. (Paris: Alcan, 1925), II, p. 475.

### *The Précieuses*[58]

Jacques Du Bosc devoted a substantial part of the chapter "La Coquette" in his *L'honneste femme* (1632-36) to criticism of various forms of affectation exemplified by coquetry. As opposed to an honnête woman, well-balanced, natural and following the rules of the bienséances, a coquette was exaggerated, artificial and appearing to be what she was not.[59] Du Bosc's arguments against the four types of coquettes that he distinguished (*coquettes de fortune*, *coquettes du visage*, *coquettes d'esprit*, and *coquettes de vertu*) can be found in criticisms of the précieuses later in the century.[60] Like a coquette, a precieuse also pretended to be what she was not: more socially elevated than she really was (*coquette de fortune*), more beautiful (*coquette du visage*), more virtuous (*coquette de vertu*) and more knowledgeable (*coquette d'esprit*). Coquettes were notorious for exaggeration, as the Abbé de Grenaille explicitly stated in his *Les Plaisirs des femmes* (1641): "Un ancien appelloit un Muscien de son temps le Coq du midi & du soir, mais ce mot me semble mieux convenir aux coquettes de nostre temps, qui ne se plaisent pas moins à se faire oüir qu'à se faire voir."[61] For these reasons, coquettes were excluded from the circle of honnête women: "[coquette] s'explique de mauuaise grace, & en de terms bizzares, & inconnus aux honnestes gens."[62] "To confirm in you a lasting

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[58] I use the term *précieuse* and its derivatives in a specific meaning, as originally coined in the early 1650s, to ridicule the affectation of feminine mondaine coteries between 1650 and 1660. The term is also used in a broader and neutral meaning. See, for example, Adam, *Litérature française. L'age classique*, I, p. 44 and Lougee, *Le paradis des femmes*, p. 7.

[59] Du Bosc, *L'honneste femme*, III, pp. 136-137. Other works discussing the negative connotation connected with "coquette" include Abbé de Goussault's *Le portrait d'une femme honneste raisonable et veritablement chretienne* (Paris: Michel Brunet, 1693), pp. 256-257; also Chapter XXII: "Une Femme raisonnable ne se contente pas de l'estre, elle veut encore passer pour telle," particularly pp. 344 and 349.

[60] See Linda Timmermans, "Une ancêtre de la précieuse: la 'coquette d'esprit' (1636) ou 'coquette savante' (1640)." *XVIIe Siécle* 167 (Avril/Juin, 1990), pp. 169-184.

[61] François de Grenaille, *Les Plaisirs des Dames* (Paris: Gervais Clovsier, 1641), p. 320.

[62] [Félix de Juvenel], *Portrait de la coquette, ou la Lettre d'Aristande, à Timagène* (Paris, 1659), p. 65.

Contempt and Aversion for the Title [of a coquette]"—wrote Trotti de La Chétardie in his *Instruction pour une jeune princesse*—

> allow me to mention a few of the Qualities, commonly found in Ladies of this *Class*, and you will find that an Understanding tainted with Levity, is join'd with a Heart intoxicated with Pleasure; That their Souls are void of Humanity, and incapable of Friendship; That they have Reason without Reflection, a narrow Judgement, and unbounded Vanity; That their Wishes are extravagant, and their Passions indirected. In short, that foolish Jealousies, and frivolous Conversation, dissembled Goodness, with perpetual Hypocrisy, a cold and malicious Way of praising others, to be flatter'd themselves, a Profussion of Words, or rather a complaisant Kind of Jargon, with which they entertain the World, most or all of those, are the infallible symptoms of a Mind distemper'd with Coquettry.[63]

Like coquettes, précieuses, too, with their exaggeration, artificiality and ambition of literary arbitration, transgressed the principles of honnêteté: modesty, naturalness and proper measure.[64]

As opposed to the salon of the marquise de Rambouillet, whose members attempted to purify the language and the manners from within polite society, the précieuses of the mid-seventeenth century were accused of trying to distinguish themselves deliberately from the rest of polite society by cultivating over-sophisticated manners within the circle of the habitués of their salons.[65] Thus, their behaviour violated the principle of conformity inherent in honnêteté. Their conversation, too, violated the rules of honnête discourse.[66] According to their critics, the précieuses went too far in the sublimation of the language, using incomprehensible jargon, and found themselves outside the confines of honnêteté; they were seen as narcissistic types and their precious style as empty formality. As La Bruyère put it,

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[63] *Instruction for the Use of a Young Lady of Quality or The Idea of a Woman of Merit* (Edinburgh: printed by W. Cheyne for the Author, 1734), p. 4 (first published as *Instruction pour une jeune princesse ou l'Idée d'une honnête femme*, Paris: Girard, 1684).

[64] Ian Maclean writes that while honnête woman was confined within domesticity, the précieuse's domain was the salon. In other words, there were no honnête women running salons in Paris, but only the précieuses (*Women Triumphant*, p. 122). This is not true, as demonstrated by Mme de Rambouillet and other (honnête) salon women of that time.

[65] Michel de Pure, *La Prétieuse; ou, le Mystère des Ruelles* (Paris, 1656-57), ed. by Emile Magne, 2 vols. (Paris, 1908), I, p. 58; see also Noémi Hepp, "La notion d'héroine," *Onze études sur l'image de la femme dans la littérature française du six-septième siècle*, 2nd ed., edited by Wolfgang Leiner (Tübingen: Günter Narr Verlag, Paris: Éditions Jean-Michel Place, 1984), p. 21.

[66] André Pessel, "De la conversation chez les précieuses," *Communications: La*

> Ils laissaient au vulgaire l'art de parler d'une manière intelligible; une chose dite entr'eux peu clairement entrainait une autre encore plus obscure, sur laquelle on enchérissait par de vraies énigmes, toujours suivies de longs applaudissements.[67]

In a chapter "Femmes précieuses" of his *Réflexions sur l'élégance et la politesse du style*, the Abbé de Bellegarde opposed good to précieux language, the latter violating the spirit of the French language.

> Il y a autant de difference entre le bon language, & le langage précieux, qu'entre les belles personnes, & les personnes fardées, qui n'ont que de faux agrémens, & qui empruntent tout leur éclat des couleurs artificielles, à quoy elles ont recours pour ébloüir le monde. Le genie françois qui est naturel & sincere ne peut souffrir tout ce qui a l'air d'affectation . . .[68]

Similarly, the précieuses' ambitions to literary arbitration were viewed as illegitimate, as in the mid-seventeenth century it was still primarily the domain of men to issue opinions in literary matters. Women could occasionally venture into this domain if they confined themselves to the rules of propriety.[69] But it was not the judgement of coquettes that literary men were looking for.[70] Michel de Pure wrote that the précieuses not only gave opinions about other people's work, but also "par vne tyrannie sans pareille, elles ne peuuent souffrit de Liure qui ne soit pas de leur goust, ny d'esprit qui ne soit de leur intelligence."[71]

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*Conversation* (Paris: Seuil, 1979), pp. 14-30.

[67] Jean de La Bruyère *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. Julien Benda (Paris: Gallimard, 1951), p. 188. Somaize in his *Le Grand Dictionnaire des Prétieuses* lists numerous examples of the language used in salons, including bizarre circumlocutions for everyday objects.

[68] Jean-Baptiste Morvan de Bellegarde, *Réflexions sur l'élégance et la politesse du style* (Paris: André Pralard, 1695; Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1971), p. 60.

[69] See, for example, Grenaille, *L'Honneste fille*, III, pp. 77-79.

[70] ". . .comme ie n'ay trauaillé qu'en fauer des honnestes femmes, ie serois bien marry d'auoir l'approbation des Coquettes . . . mon liure seroit bien mauuais, si elles en faissoient vn bon iugement." Grenaille, *La bibliothèque des dames* (Paris: Anthoine de Sommaville, 1640), as quoted by Ian Maclean, *Woman Triumphant*, p. 149.

[71] De Pure, *La Prétieuse*, II, pp. 314-315; see also Somaize, *Le Grand Dictionnaire*

The criticism of the précieuses was further fuelled by their rejection of the traditional women's roles as wives and mothers expected from honnête women by seventeenth-century society. This could lead to the violation of the existing social and moral order and disturb the traditional relationships between the sexes. Antoine Courtin, in the *Traité de la jalousie*, defending the principle of hierarchy within marriage (that is, the superior position of a husband), argued that:

> comme nulle société ne peut subsister que par le concert ou la subversion des parties qui la composent; la nature a aussi imposé cette loy dans le mariage . . . . la famille d'un homme est comparée à un Etat monarchique où il n'y en a qu'en seul qui commande.[72]

Thus, by rebelling against the traditional idea of marriage, the précieuses rebelled against the existing political status quo.

Moreover, the précieuses violated the rules of honnêteté by their alleged moral laxity. Préciosité became an ambiguous notion associated, on the one hand, with wit, politeness, urbanity, sophistication, feminity and gallantry, but on the other, with excessive affectation of manners, pretentiousness, incomprehensible jargon, luxury, illicit love, intrigues and coteries which operated on sheer greed and ambition, and "liberation" from restrictions imposed on a woman by the traditional society.[73]

Carolyn Lougee observed that the criticism of salons précieux had deeper social implications than only their allegedly poor imitation of good patterns of feminine honnêteté. It also stemmed from a negative assessment of the influence of salons on French social structure. The diversity of social origins of salon hostesses, reflecting a mixture of the traditional aristocratic elite, the newly ennobled and the non-noble, with wealth as the homogenizing element, made it clear that most of them were not the preserve of a traditional noble elite.[74] Therefore, the salons were perceived as an

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*des Prétieuses*, I, p. 22.

[72] Antoine Courtin, *Traité de la jalousie* (1685), p. 49; as quoted by Timmermans, *L'accès des femmes à la culture*, p. 358.

[73] Roger Lathuillère, *La Préciosité. Étude historique et linguistique*, vol. I (Genève: Librairie Droz, 1966), pp. 30-60.

[74] Lougee, *Le Paradis des Femmes*, pp. 113-137 and 170. Erica Harth argues that Lougee's suggestion that social anxiety aroused by the disturbance of traditional orders in

extension of elite culture over people outside the traditional social elite, by people outside this group. Such an extension not only challenged the elite's monopoly in cultural matters, but could also disturb the social structure by blurring the distinctions instituted by birth and by enhancing social mobility and enlargement of social elites. As a result, the attacks were aimed not at *all* salons, but primarily at those which, in the eyes of the critics, usurped the role they assumed; the aristocratic salon de Rambouillet, for example, remained intact since its credentials, and therefore authority, were unquestioned.[75]

The term *préciosité* (and its derivatives *précieuse*, *précieux*) retained its original pejorative connotation throughout the seventeenth century and was used, by men and women alike, as an ideological notion designating that which was pretentious, exaggerated, and artificial; in other words, anything that did not fit into the concept of feminine honnêteté.[76] In 1637, Des Marets de Saint-Sorlin wrote a comedy on préciosité, *Les Visionnaires*; about 1656, Saint-Evremond wrote a poem, *Le Cercle*; Furetière, Boileau, and Pascal were among those who publicly ridiculed the pretentiousness of the salons précieux and the aspirations of the précieuses to literary connoisseurship. For Michel de Pure the epithet "précieux" was always negative.[77] Mlle de Montpensier wrote in 1658 about the "sect" generally criticized by everyone, "the common object of ridicule."[78] *Les précieuses ridicules*, a caricature of pretentious salons, staged in 1659,

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salons is not necessarily a sufficient explanation of that anxiety. The same mixture of social groups can be found in the men's academies, which did not provoke a corresponding hostility. See, Harth, *Cartesian Women*, p. 31.

[75] For example, Vaugelas in his *Remarques sur la langue françoise* (1647) overrides his general dislike of new words and looks favourably at the neologism 'debrutaliser' because it was created by Mme de Rambouillet; see Wendy Ayres-Bennett, "Women and Grammar in Seventeenth-century France," pp. 11-12. Similarly, Molière in *Les femmes savantes* was not against savant women in the upper classes but in the bourgeoisie, for fear that it would turn them away from domestic roles.

[76] My research does not confirm that the notion became neutral by the end of the seventeenth century, as Carolyn Lougee suggests in *Le Paradis des Femmes*, p. 7.

[77] De Pure, *La Prétieuse*; see Ian M. Richmond, *Héroisme et Galanterie: l'Abbé de Pure, témoin d'une crise (1653-1665)* (Sherbrooke, Québec: Editions Naaman, 1977), p. 37.

[78] [Anne Marie Louise d'Orléans, Duchessee de Montpensier], *La Galerie des portraits de Mlle de Montpensier*, ed. Édouard de Barthélemy (Paris: Didier, 1860), pp. 515-516.

began Molière's successful career in Paris under royal patronage.[79] In 1674, Poullain de Barre criticized the précieuses in the *De l'éducation des femmes*; and Mme de Maintenon criticized the "demoiselles vaines et précieuses qu'il y avait à Saint-Cyr dans les commencements."[80] Richelet noted in his *Dictionnaire* (1689) that "the word, unless accompanied by a positive epithet, is always understood pejoratively." The fact that some authors felt compelled to neutralize the pejorative connotation of the term préciosité by using a "positive epithet" (most often *vraie*, as opposed to *fausse*),[81] only confirms the predominance of ridiculous précieuses and shows that the term was a powerful tool of control over purity within the ranks of honnête women.

### ***Fear of préciosité: eighteenth-century salons***

The binary opposition, "genuine-false" or "authentic-imitative," used in the seventeenth century by the critics of salons and the aspirations of salonnières, in an attempt to distinguish the salons proper (that is, those run by women following the precepts of honnêteté) from the usurpers rejecting them, lost its relevance in the eighteenth century. Salons became an accepted form of social life and women running them were no longer perceived as violating any established order, neither social nor moral. It was not because French society changed its standards regarding the role of women in comparison with the age of Louis XIV, but rather because the eighteenth-century salon women conformed to what contemporary society prescribed for them as appropriate.

Seventeenth-century précieuses breaking rules of propriety imposed on women had no counterpart among eighteenth-century salonnières. The terms *pédante* and *précieuse* retained their negative connotation, in particular stigmatizing women's wish to distinguish themselves by "excessive" intellectual ambitions. Unlike the vicomtesse d'Auchy, eighteenth-century Parisian salonnières did not attempt to emulate the Académie Française.[82] Mme du Deffand described with appreciation her own education which was meant to give her some general knowledge, to form taste, judgement and discernment, without, however, making her pedantic or précieuse. ". . . j'accepterais avec grand plaisir de revenir à quatre ans, d'avoir pour gouverneur un Horace qui me ferait tout apprendre, langues, sciences, etc., et qui m'empêcherait bien de devenir pédante ou précieuse. Il me formerait le goût, le jugement, le discernement . . ."[83] As Morellet informs us, Mme Geoffrin did not believe that women needed to be well educated.[84] "Le nom *savante*," wrote Thomas about Mme Geoffrin, "que des étrangers quelquefois lui donnoient, d'après sa célébrité et ses liaisons, sembloit l'effrayer."[85] As a result, in contrast to the *grand siècle*, eighteenth-century critics did not see salons as subverting the traditional status quo but rather as coteries preserving the conservative social, political and aesthetic values of the Old Regime.[86]

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[79] Molière was not entirely adverse to the salons, as is proved by his earlier career. His criticism of the *précieuses*, as it seems, did not result from the assumption that a person without noble status should not imitate nobility's manners, but rather was a reaction to the distorted and ludicrous way in which these manners were being imitated.

[80] Françoise d'Aubigne, Marquise de Maintenon, *Letters et entretiens sur l'éducation des filles*, ed. by Théophile Lavallée, 2nd ed., 2 vols. (Paris: Charpentier, 1861), I, p. 226.

[81] For example, Somaize, in *Grand Dictionnaire des Précieuses* (1661); [Gabriel] Gilbert, *Vraie et fausse précieuse* (1661).

At the beginning of the eighteenth century the history of the Parisian salons seemed to have come full circle and found itself exactly at the same place as it was at the beginning of the previous century. Almost one hundred years after the marquise de Rambouillet, another marquise, Madame de Lambert (1647-1733), founded a salon in Paris motivated by similar reasons. Shocked by the license and the decline of morals at the end of the reign of Louis XIV (especially the fashion for gambling), she was determined to reinstate the traditional ideals of propriety, good manners and good taste, and to create an environment where honnête persons could meet and discuss literary, philosophical, political or even scientific topics, as well as current news. The ideal she had in mind was the salon of the marquise de Rambouillet rather than a salon précieux;[87] a choice reinforced by her own experience: having lived through the second half of the seventeenth century, Mme de Lambert was wise enough to avoid what was an object of ridicule and satire for the salon critics in her youth. In an attempt to satisfy, on the one hand, the rules of honnêteté and the requirements of Parisian polite society, and on the other, her own intellectual curiosity, she introduced a custom, continued by salonnières throughout the eighteenth century, of receiving two different categories of guests on two different days of the week. On Wednesday, Mme de Lambert received *gens de monde*, and on Tuesdays academicians, literary men and savants. While the Wednesday gatherings were more relaxed and spent on talking about the news from Versailles (and then from the Palais Royal), Tuesdays were devoted to conversations on new literary works, moral philosophy, disputes among literary men, and intrigues around elections to the Académie Française.

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[82] As Erica Harth noticed, there was an irony in the fact that eighteenth-century salon women gave up their academic pretensions and at the same time they turned into power brokers in the scramble for academic chairs for men they received in their salons. *Cartesian Women*, p. 33.

[83] Mme du Deffand to Horace Walpole, 11 December, 1767, *Horace Walpole's Correspondence with Madame du Deffand and Wiart*, 6 vols., ed. by W. S. Lewis and Warren Hunting Smith (London: Oxford University Press,Humphrey Milford, New Haven: Yale University Press, 1939-1962), I (III), p. 395.

[84] ". . . elle ne croyoit pas que les femmes eussent besoin d'être fort instruites." "Portrait de Madame Geoffrin par A. Morellet," in *Eloges de Madame Geoffrin, contemporaine de Madame du Deffand, par MM. Morellet, Thomas et d'Alembert suivis de lettres de Madame Geoffrin et à Madame Geoffrin; d'un Essai sur la conversation, etc., etc., par M. Morellet* (Paris: H. Nicolle, 1812), p. 14.

[85] "A la mémoire de Madame Geoffrin par Thomas," in *Ibid.*, p. 86.

[86] The most eminent eighteenth-century exponent of salon criticism, Jean-Jacques Rousseau, denounced the power of salons to decide the fate of literary works in a number of his publications, the most important of which include: *Discours sur les sciences et les arts* (1750); *Discours sur l'origine de l'inégalité* (1755); and *Lettre à d'Alembert sur les spectacles* (1758), being a major attack against the conservative tradition represented by salons.

Fearing to be labelled a précieuse, which still retained an almost compromising connotation for an honnête woman, and to create an *académie femelle* in the vicomtesse d'Auchy's style, the marquise de Lambert limited the number of women she received and accepted them only in the less formal and less serious atmosphere of her Wednesday meetings.[88] In her *Avis à sa fille*, Mme de Lambert warned her daughter to moderate her taste for *sciences extraordinaires* and advised her to be "en garde contre le goût du bel esprit."[89] In order not to appear savante, Mme de Lambert refused to publish her own writings and let them circulate only in manuscript and exclusively among her friends. It was only in 1726 that she decided to have the first of them printed, as a result of persuasion from her friends, and when it was certain that the publication would not hamper her reputation.

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[87] Linda Timmermans (*L'accès des femmes à la culture*, p. 80, n. 131) suggests that the salon of Mme de Lambert continued the tradition initiated by Mme des Loges, rather than by Mme de Rambouillet, that is, a salon with more emphasis on intellectual than entertaining activity. However, what closely links the salon of Mme de Lambert with that of Mme de Rambouillet is the emphasis on propriety and not giving up on entertainment (two days of reception for two separate groups of guests allowed both intellectual and less formal meetings).

Although Mme de Lambert as a salon hostess might appear as belonging to the previous century, she was in fact a woman of her own time who amalgamated the past and the future: her successors demonstrate that the past influenced the future much more than has been admitted by some present-day writers on Parisian salons. Mme de Tencin, her immediate follower, who ran her salon until 1749, also divided her guests into two separate groups: artists were received on Mondays, and intellectuals and men of letters on Wednesdays.[90] The marquise du Deffand, too, had two days of reception. As writes Feuillet de Conches,

> C'était d'abord le dimanche qu'on s'assamblait, puis, le samedi à un grand souper où apparaissaient les plus grands noms. D'ordinaire, elle [Mme du Deffand] avait deux soupers par semaine, le mercredi et le jeudi. Le mercredi elle avait les maréchaux de Mirepoix et de Luxembourg, les princes, les duchesses, les marquises, les comtesses, les diplomats, les évêques, etc. Le jeudi, elle recueillait l'abbé Barthélemy, un certain président de la Cour des Monnaies nommé de Cotte, fort riche, très

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[88] Suzanne Delorme, "Le salon de la Marquise de Lambert, berceau de l'*Encyclopédie*," in *L'Encyclopédie et le progrès des sciences et des techniques* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France, 1952), p. 20; Emmanuel de Broglie, "Les mardis et les mercredis de la Marquise de Lambert, 1710-1733" *Correspondant* [Paris], vol. 179, 1895, pp. 147-161; Roger Marchal, *Madame de Lambert et son milieu*. Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century (Oxford: The Voltaire Foundation at the Taylor Institution, 1991), p. 281.

[89] Mme de Lambert, *Avis à sa fille*, in *Oeuvres de Madame la Marquise de Lambert* (Lausanne,: Marc-Michel Bosquet, 1748), p. 112.

[90] Artists received on Mondays were mainly painters: Carle Van Loo, Vernet, Soufflot, Lemoine, La Tour; men of letters received on Wednesdays and included: Helvetius (before he published *l'Esprit*), d'Alembert, Grimm, Mairan, Marivaux, Marmontel, Morellet, Chastellux, Saint-Lambert, and Raynal. André Cazes, *Grimm et les Encyclopédistes* (Paris: Les Presses Universitaires de France, 1933), p. 339.

> recherché et très estimé; quelquefois l'évêque d'Arras (M.de Conzié), M. Necker et de temps en temps quelques autres.[91]

Mme Geoffrin, whose salon flourished from about 1749, observed a similar division: she had her Mondays reserved for artists (mostly painters), and Wednesdays for men of letters and intellectuals.[92] Mlle de Lespinasse was the only woman admitted at her Wednesday meetings, Marmontel writes.[93] Such divisions were not merely "technical" and meant to facilite carrying on different forms of a discourse; rather, they may be seen as the salonnières' attempt to accommodate the fragmented public opinion of *la ville*.[94] Dividing guests into exclusive groups also reflected social and professional hierarchies and prejudices that existed in eighteenth-century France and were shared by the salon women; a subject that I will discuss later in this chapter. It undermines a thesis, advanced by some present day authors, that eighteenth-century Parisian salons were places where people of various social origins and professions could freely mix and where differences instituted by birth were levelled.[95]

Not only were salon women themselves particular about observing the exigencies of honnête social conduct, but they were viewed and commented upon by their guests in terms of the rules of honnêteté. An eighteenth-century ideal woman was an honnête woman, strikingly similar to the one promoted in the previous century. "Une femme belle et aimable, galante sans coquetterie, vertueuse sans sagesse, simple avec dignité, douce par humeur et polié par bonté . . ." was the ideal personified by the duchesse La Valière (d. 1793), according to marquise de Gontaud.[96] Voltaire, too, left a portrait of the duchesse which demonstrates that the characteristics of feminine honnêteté as established in the previous century still constituted the ultimate compliments that could be paid to a woman:

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[91] [Félix Sébastien] Feuillet de Conches, *Les salons de conversation au dix-huitième siècle* (Paris: Charavay Frères, 1882), p. 74.

[92] See: *Mémoires inédits de l'Abbé Morellet. Sur les dix-huitième siècle et sur la Révolution*, 2nd ed., 2 vols ([Paris 1822], Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1967), I, p. 85; Jean-Françoise Marmontel, *Mémoires*, edited by John Renwick, 2 vols. (Clermont-Ferrand: G. de Bussac, 1972), I, pp. 161, 167-169. Marmontel writes that from time to time Mme Geoffrin received a small company, *petits soupers*, and the three women Marmontel remembers being admitted were were the comtessel de Brionne, the marquise de Duras and the comtesse d'Egmont. Marmontel, *Mémoires*, I, p. 169.

[93] Marmontel, *Mémoires*, I, p. 164-165.

[94] La Bruyère had already pointed out the fragmentation of *la ville*: "La ville est partagée en diverses sociétés, qui sont comme autant de petites républiques, qui ont leurs lois, leurs usages, leurs jargons, leurs mots pour rire." *Les Caractères ou les moeurs de ce siècle* in *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1951), "De la ville", 4, p. 207; Elena Russo, "'La science du monde': the double tradition of *honnêteté* in Marivaux and Crébillon," *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 319 (1994), n. 14, p. 137.

[95] This thesis is an outcome of Habermas's theory of "public sphere" and has been recently advanced, for example, by Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters* (London and Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994) and Daniel,Gordon *Citizens without Sovereignty* (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1994).

> Etre femme sans jalousie
> Et belle sans coquetterie,
> Bien juger sans beaucoup savoir,
> Et bien parler, sans le vouloir,
> N'être haute ni familière,
> N'avoir point d'inégalité;
> C'est le portrait de Lavallière
> Il n'est ni fini ni flatté.[97]

Mme du Deffand blamed Mme de Châtelet for showing characteristics attributed to a *coquette d'esprit* by Jacques Du Bosc:

> Elle est née avec assez d'esprit; le désir d'en paraitre davantage lui a fait préférer l'étude des sciences les plus abstraites aux connaissances agréables: elle croit par cette singularité parvenir à une plus grande réputation et à une supériorité décidée sur toutes les femmes. . . . Madame travaille avec tant de soin à paraitre ce qu'elle n'est pas, qu'on ne sait plus ce qu'elle est en effet. Ses défauts mêmes ne lui sont peut-être pas naturels, ils pourraient tenir à ses prétensions, son peu d'égard à l'état de Princesse, sa sécheresse à celui de savante et son étourderie à celui de jolie femme.[98]

By contrast, Mme de Mirepoix was for Mme du Deffand the epitome of an honnête femme:

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[96] As quoted by Feuillet de Conches, *Les salons de conversation aux dix-huitième siècle*, p. 82.

[97] *Ibid.*, p. 83.

[98] Mme du Deffand, "Portrait de Madame la Marquise du Châtelet," in *Horace Walpole's Correspondence with Madame du Deffant and Wiart*, VI (VIII), Appendix 5a, p. 116.

> Mme de Mirepoix est si modeste, son amour-propre se fait si peu sentir, elle est si peu occupée d'elle-même, qu'il est difficile de faire son portrait. La vanité est ce qui décèle le plus promptement le caractère . . . jamais elle ne parle d'elle, jamais elle ne décide, rarement elle dispute, . . .il n'y a que les occasions qui font connaitre combien elle a d'esprit, de jugement, et de goût, une simplicité noble, qui fait le fond de son caractère, bannit en elle toute ostentation, et toute prétention et la tient (pour ainsi dire) quelque temps cachée. . . . Le désir qu'elle a de plaire ressemble plus à la politesse qu'à la coquetterie, aussi les femmes la voient sans jalousie, et les hommes n'osent en devenir amoureux . . .[99]

Descriptions of Parisian salonnières left by some of their literary guests also testify that the criteria of traditional feminine propriety determined the eighteenth-century perception and evaluation of these women. La Harpe wrote about Mme du Deffand shortly after her death that "Elle avait de l'esprit naturel; un goût ennemi de toute affectation, un tact assez sûr, quand le caprice ou la prévention n'égarait pas ses jugements; mais souvent l'humeur dictait ses opinions; et ses liaisons ou ses intimitiés décidaient trop de sa manière de penser."[100] According to Jean-François Marmontel, a playwright, poet, editor, novelist, librettist, critic, and one of the literary lions of eighteenth-century Europe, Mme Geoffrin was "Un peu semblable à cet Anglais vaporeux qui croyait être de verre, elle évitait comme d'autant d'écueils tout ce qui l'auroit exposée au choc des passions humaines; . . .[101] And, as emphasized by another author, "elle respectait les convenances établies, et ses contemporains lui rendent le témoignage qu'elle ne varia jamais sur ce point. Elle ne permettait pas à ses philosophes de faire du scandale.[102]

In his eulogy of Mme Geoffrin, Morellet found it worth emphasizing that Mme Geoffrin had no pretensions to learning.

> . . . elle étoit exempte de toute prétention au savoir . . . [elle] étoit . . . ignorante, mais d'une ignorante aimable qu'elle avouoit de bonne grâce; de

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[99] *Ibid.*, Appendix 5c, pp. 78-79.

[100] Jean-François de La Harpe, *Correspondance Littéraire*, 4 vols. (Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1968), II, p. 315.

[101] Marmontel, *Mémoires*, I, p. 161.

[102] As quoted by M. H. Mallortie, "Discours d'ouverture," *Mémoires de l'Académie des sciences, lettres et arts d'Arras* (Arras: Rohard-Courtin, 1892), p. 16.

> cette ignorance sans obstination, qui se laisse instruire, qui s'instruit même avec plaisir, au hasard de tout oublier pour s'en instruire encore . . .[103]

Elsewhere, Morellet gave an example of this trait of Mme Geoffrin's personality:

> [U]n Italien lui apporta un Ouvrage en sa langue, & prodiguoit en le lui présantant, les plus grands éloges à l'importance du suffrage d'une Dame si savante: "M. je ne suis pas savante, mon suffrage n'est rien; je ne suis point célèbre, & je ne sais point l'Italien. . . . Il alloit continuer, lorsque Madame Geoffrin l'interrompit: M. je ne sais même pas l'orthographe.[104]

If La Harpe is to be believed, Mme Geoffrin not only lacked formal education, but also was not very interested in reading, nor was she sensitive to arts and letters. However, she made a perfect honnête woman and a salonnière, because of her tact, simplicity, decency and propriety:

> . . . elle est née avec un sens droit, un caractère sage et modéré. Elle a cette politesse de bon goût que donne un grand usage du monde, et personne ne possède mieux le tact des convenances. . . . Elle est, dans ses habillements, d'une extrême simplicité qui plait beaucoup, parce qu'elle est relevée par une extrême propreté . . .[105]

La Harpe also claimed that Mlle de Lespinasse, who received regularly from 1764 to 1776, was superior in her role as an honnête salonnière because "Personne . . . ne savait mieux faire les honneurs de sa maison: elle mettait tout son monde à sa place, et chacun était content de la sienne. Elle avait un grand usage du monde, et l'espèce de politesse la plus aimable, celle qui a le ton de l'intérêt."[106] In the same vein, Marmontel obviously expected Mme Necker to behave according to the ideal of honnêteté when he criticized her for her lack of naturalness:

> Etrangère aux moeurs de Paris, madame Necker n'avoit aucun des agrémens d'une jeune Française. Dans ses manières, dans son langage, ce n'étoit ni l'air, ni le ton d'une femme élevée à l'école des arts, formée à l'école du monde. Sans goût dans sa parure, sans aisance dans son maintien, sans attrait dans sa politesse, son esprit, comme sa contenance,

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[103] "Portrait de Madame Geoffrin par A. Morellet," in *Eloges de Madame Geoffrin*, p. 15.

[104] *Portrait de Madame Geoffrin* par M. L. M [orellet] (Paris, 1777), p. 8.

[105] La Harpe, *Correspondance littéraire*, I, pp. 242-243.

[106] *Ibid.*, I, p. 386.

> étoit trop ajusté pour avoir de la grâce. . . . On la voit tout occupée à se rendre agréable à sa société, empressée à bien recevoir ceux qu'elle y avait admis, attentive à dire à chacun ce qui pouvait lui plaire davantage; mais tout cela était prémédité; rien ne coulait de source, rien ne faisait illusion.[107]

The lack of naturalness did not make Mme Necker a perfect salonnière for Marmontel. "Jamais une saillie, jamais un mot piquant, jamais un trait qui pût réveiller les esprits. Soucieuse, inquiète, sitôt qu'elle voyoit la scène et le dialogue languir, ses regards en cherchoient la cause dans nos yeux."[108] Marmontel admitted, however, that despite shortcomings, Mme Necker possessed ". . . un charme plus digne d'elle étoit celui de la décence, de la candeur, de la bonté. Une éducation vertueuse, et des études solitaires, lui avoient donné tout ce que la culture peut ajouter dans l'âme à un excellent naturel."[109] Charles Collé also found it appropriate to criticise Mme Necker: "C'est une femme dégagée des sens, à ce qu'elle prétend, . . . sans esprit, sans sentiment à elle."[110]

La Harpe, although more positively tuned to Mme Necker than Marmontel and Collé, also described her in terms of the conceptual framework of honnêteté: "Cette dame a beaucoup de connaissances dont elle ne fait point parade, une grande fortune, dont elle fait un excellent usage, des moeurs sévères, et beaucoup de goût pour la société des gens de lettres et pour toutes les choses d'esprit."[111]

Salonnières were scrutinized against the rules of honnêteté by men and women alike. Mme du Deffand wrote about Mme Necker that "[elle] a de l'esprit, mais il est d'une sphère trop élevée pour que l'on puisse communiquer avec elle."[112] [Mme Necker] est roide and froide, pleine d'amour-propre, mais honnête personne . . ."[113] The Baroness d'Oberkirch, too, left an unfavourable picture of Mme Necker precisely because she violated the rules of honnêteté:

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[107] Marmontel, *Mémoires*, I, p. 288.

[108] *Ibid.*, I, p. 289.

[109] *Ibid.*, I, p. 288.

[110] S. Lenel, *Un homme de lettres au XVIIIe siècle: Marmontel d'après des documents nouveaux et inédits* (Paris, 1902, Genève: Slatkine, 1970), p. 416; Charles Collé, *Journal et mémoires sur les hommes de letters . . . 1748–1772*, ed. by Hénri Bonhomme, 3 vols. (Paris: F. Didot, 1868), Mars 1772, t. III, pp. 343-345

[111] La Harpe, *Correspondance littéraire*, I, p. 74.

[112] A letter to Horace Walpole, 9 June, 1776, *Horace Walpole's Correspondence with Madame Du Deffand and Wiart*, VI (IV), p. 327. Marmontel shared this opinion: "J'affectais d'opposer mes idées simples et vulgaires à ses hauteurs inaccessibles pour communiquer avec moi." See: Lenel, *Un homme de lettres au XVIIIe siècle*, p. 416.

> En dépit des grandes positions qu'elle a occupées, c'est une institutrice, et rien de plus. Elle est pédante et prétentieuse au delà de tout. . . . elle a reçu une excellente éducation, dont elle profite par le travers. . . . [however] Elle n'aura jamais l'art de plaire. Pour tout dire en un mot, elle ne sait ni pleurer ni sourire.[114]

Exaggeration was equally blameworthy for a woman. Mme du Deffand described herself as an "ennemie de toute fausseté et affectation."[115] Mme de Genlis' ostentation in displaying her musical accomplishments provoked the Baroness d'Oberkirch (herself able to play harpsichord) to ironic remarks that "[u]n ridicule immense de cette femme masculine, c'est sa harpe; elle la porte partout . . . elle joue sur une croûte de pain et elle s'exerce avec une ficelle."[116]

## The Salonnière as a Social Conservative

Parisian salon women have sometimes been viewed as advocates of a social and cultural fusion between the traditional social elite and non-elite groups by receiving nobles and non-nobles alike (the latter exclusively on the basis of their merit or talent) and thus creating a sphere independent of rule-bound institutions and established cultural bodies. This opinion originated from the observation that some non-noble literary men, such as Vincent de Voiture, were invited to some seventeenth-century Parisian salons and that in the next century the circle of non-nobles received in salons was even broader than in the

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Madame Du Deffand was much more moderate in her judgement in her letter to Horace Walpole, of 20 May, 1775: "[Mme Necker] a de l'esprit et du mérite; sa société ordinaire sont des gens de lettres, qui, comme vous savez, ne m'aiment point . . ." *Horace Walpole's Correspondence with Madame Du Deffand and Wiart*, VI (IV), pp. 191-192.

[113] A letter to Horace Walpole, 5 May, 1776, *Ibid.*, VI (IV), p. 310.

[114] *Mémoires de la Baronne d'Oberkirch sur la cour de Louis XVI et de la société française avant 1789*, ed. by Suzanne Burkard (Paris: Mercure de France, 1970), p. 190.

[115] "Portrait de Mme la M. du D. fait par elle-même en 1728," *Horace Walpole's Correspondence with Madame Du Deffand and Wiart*, VIII (VI), Appendix 3, p. 48.

previous century. Indeed, pre-Revolutionary French salons were primarily literary in orientation (as literature was at the top of the classical hierarchy of genres) and talented literary men had easier access to them than did representatives of other professional groups. It should not be concluded, however, that the presence of literary men and intellectuals means that pre-Revolutionary Parisian salons were socially radical.

In fact, salons had their own rules which, although not institutional, imposed numerous limits on their allegedly open-door policy in practice. Beginning with the seventeenth-century, this policy was at least ambiguous. Men of letters received in salons were expected to provide sophisticated entertainment to their patrons by reading them their works and by submitting these works to scrutiny, in exchange for being admitted to polite society and exposed to its manners, the ultimate value this society could offer. But this "symbiosis" should not delude one: it was after all the writers who were supposed to (and did) satisfy the expectations of polite society, and not vice versa. Polite society was indispensable for an author, as it was this society that decided the success or the failure of his work. The rules of good writing were the rules of honnêteté. François de Callières (1693) left no doubt about the place of seventeenth-century literary men *versus* polite society:

> . . . les Auteurs sont aussi de plaisantes gens . . . pour être comparés aux gens de qualité sur le langage, ce ne sont que de malheureux copistes de belles choses que nous disons, & quand ils veulent acquérir de la réputation, il faut qu'ils viennent le mandier dans nos hôtels, qu'ils nous lisent leurs ouvrages du beau ton, avant que de les donner au public . . .[117]

Callières' opinion certainly does not confirm the salons' policy of social equality between members of polite society and roturiers. The salons of the *grand siècle* were thus open to the authors who were willing to write for polite society and according to its rules; not to all who possessed merit or talent.

Eighteenth-century Parisian salons did not open their doors to all talented people either. Norbert Elias suggessted that, in fact, the opposite is true: while traditional signs

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[116] *Ibid.*, p. 317.

[117] François de Callières, *Des Mots à la mode et des nouvelles façons de parler bourgeois* . . . (Paris: Claude Barbin, 1693), p. 12.

of social status were less and less rigid, the norms of behaviour in salons were not.[118] Mme du Deffand, for example, made polite manners and "proper" views a major criterion of admission to her salon and writers were tolerated there on condition that they respected the rules of propriety. For that reason, Diderot and Marmontel were among those never invited by Mme du Deffand.[119] Similarly, Mme Geoffrin excluded Diderot from her salons because she was afraid that he would not observe the rules of an honnête conversation.

And yet, despite the limitations, the position of a literary man was quite elevated in comparison with the representatives of other professions. In fact, the composition of the salon guests reflected a ranking of their profession in the social hierarchy. Salonnières were responding to the changes rather than causing them. Professional musicians and composers, for example, were always preceded by literary men and painters. Although music was a traditional entertainment of the higher social orders and, from the second half of the seventeenth century, was increasingly popular among the ascending ones, the representatives of musical professions were never favoured as guests in Parisian salons, neither in the seventeenth nor in the eighteenth centuries. Music was viewed as inferior to literature and painting[120] and musicians lower in the professional hierarchy than literary men and painters. Charles Sorel in the *Les loix de la galanterie* (1644) wrote about "low people" (musicians) with whom one has to familiarize oneself to give a concert in a lady's place.[121] "[Comme] la pluspart des gens de musique sont bizarres"—commented Tallemant des Réaux on Michel Lambert,[122] and another writer echoed in 1699:

> [musiciens, habitant naturels d'Opéra;] ce sont des peuples un peu bizzares: ils ne parlent qu'en chantant, ne marchent qu'en dansant . . . le

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[118] See Norbert Elias, *The court society* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1983), pp. 78-116.

[119] Rémy G. Saisselin, L'évolution du concept de l'honnêteté de 1660 à 1789, Ph.D. diss., University of Wisconsin, 1957, p. 111.

[120] I will discuss this later in this chapter, in the section on conservative aesthetic views of salonnières.

[121] Charles Sorel, *Les loix de la galanterie* (1644), ed. by L. Lalanne (Paris, 1855), pp. 21-22.

[122] Tallemant des Réaux, *Historiettes*, II, p. 526.

> raisonnement est rare parmi ces peuples; comme ils ont la tête pleine de Musique, ils ne pensent que des chants, et n'expriment que des sons.[123]

Abbé Mersenne went even further to say that "Ceux qui ont le jugement solide ne peuvent entendre parler de joueurs de luth, de violon ou d'autres instruments, qu'ils ne s'en rient comme de jongleurs et de ménestriers qui n'ont l'esprit et les mains propres qu'à servir de plaisantins."[124]

A paternalistic attitude towards musicians persisted in the eighteenth century, as can be judged from a letter written by Voltaire to Charles Jean François Hénault in 1744: "Ce Rameau est aussi grand original que grand musicien. Il me mande *que j'aye à mettre en quatre vers tout ce qui est en huit, et en huit tout ce qui est en quatre*. Il est fou; mais je tiens toujours qu'il faut avoir pitié des talents. Permis d'être fou à celui qui a fait l'acte des Incas [i.e. one of the *entrées* of the *Indes galantes*]."[125]

Some of these remarks should be seen through the perspective of criticism of opera as a genre violating the rules of literary classical doctrine. But by the end of the seventeenth century opera established itself as a legitimate genre, primarily due to royal support and protection. The recognition of the opera as a politically useful musical genre did not improve the traditional image of musicians. Abbé François Raguenet, in his book expressing his conviction of the superiority of Italian over French music, published in 1702, gave a comprehensive account of the inferior social position of musicians in seventeenth-century France in comparison with Italy.

> J'ay vû, à Rome, à un même Opéra, Corelli, Pasquini, & Gaëtani, qui sont constamment les premiers hommes du monde pour le Violon, pour le Clavessin, & pour le Thüorbe [sic] ou l'Archilut: Aussi sont-ce des gens à qui, pour un mois ou six semaines au plus, on donne chacun trois & quatre cens pistoles. C'est la manière dont on traite & dont on paye les Musiciens, qui est cause en partie, qu'il y en a & qu'il y en aura toûjours beau plus chez les Italiens, que chez nous. On les méprise, en France,

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[123] Charles Dufresny, *Amusements serieux et comiques* (Paris, 1699), ed. by John Dunkley (Exeter: University of Exeter, 1976), pp. 64-65.

[124] Marin Mersenne, *Questions harmoniques*, as quoted by Lionel de La Laurencie, *Le goût musical en France* (Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1970), p. 131.

[125] Voltaire to Charles Jean François Hénault, 14 September, 1744, *Correspondance de Voltaire*, ed. by Theodore Besterman, 107 vols. (Genève: Institut et Musée Voltaire, 1953), XIV, p. 51.

> comme des gens d'une profession basse; en Italie, on les estime & on les caresse comme des illustres. Ils sont des fortunes tres considérables parmi les Italiens: Et, chez nous, à peine gagnent-ils de quoi vivre; de là vient qu'il y a dix fois plus de personnes qui s'attachent à la musique en Italie, qu'en France; & parmi un plus grand nombre de gens qui s'y appliquent, il est naturel que même toutes choses étant égales, il y en ait aussi un plus grand nombre qui y réussissent. Rien n'est plus commun, en ce pais-là, que les Joüeurs d'Instrumens, les Musiciens, & la Musique.[126]

Indeed, in the hierarchy of renowned personages of the Grand Siècle musicians occupied the lowest postion, preceeded by men of letters, historians, orators and poets; ministers and civic officers; military men; and by the clergy. Some of the greatest composers of the Grand Siècle, such as Marc-Antoine Charpentier, Michel Lambert, and Pierre Guédron, were not even considered *illustres* by their contemporaries.[127] The place of a professional musician in the social hierarchy of seventeenth-century France was symbolically confirmed by Louis XIV himself: despite the king's fondness for music and his recognition of the usefulness of opera for the monarchy, Jean-Baptiste Lully was the only musician ennobled by him, and even this one case was actually extorted by Lully.[128]

The degree of social isolation of seventeenth-century musicians is indicated by the fact that they typically formed dynasties, intermarrying within their own professional group. There are no musicians either among fathers or husbands of seventeenth-century Parisian salon women.[129] There are also no professional musicians among the hostesses of 251 salons *précieuses* listed by Somaize in his *Dictionnaire*.

What made entry to the salons difficult for the professional musicians was their usually poor general education. According to Abbé Mersenne's *Harmonie universelle*

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[126] François Raguenet, *Parallèle des Italiens et des Français en ce qui regarde la musique et les Opéras* (Paris: Jean Moreau, 1702), pp. 110-113.

[127] Charles Perrault, *Les Hommes Illustres qui ont paru en France pendant ce siècle avec leurs portraits au naturel*, 2 vols. (Paris: A. Dezallier, 1696-1700, ed. facsimile, 1970). Similarly, La Roque, in his *Traité de la noblesse et de toutes ses differentes especes* (Rouen: Pierre Le Boucher Libraire et Jore pere & fils, 1734), brought up a question whether performing some professions would deprive their owners of noble status. Musical professions are not even mentioned among these discussed by La Roque.

[128] See: Marcelle Benoit, *Versailles et les musiciens du roi* (Paris: Editions A. et J. Picard, 1971), pp. 390-396.

[129] Lougee, *Le Paradis des femmes*, pp. 138-170.

(1635-36), the musician who wants to master the *musique accentuelle* [expressive music], the natural and universal language of the passions, must be versed, in addition to music, in humane letters (grammar, rhetoric, history and poetry); philosophical disciplines (dialectics, physics, moral philosophy and theology), as well as to have some knowledge of architecture, physics of sound, history of his profession, and to be able to build and repair his own instruments.[130] This ideal, however, was far from reality. In practice, most seventeenth-century professional musicians, coming from lower social classes, could hardly write: many were simply illiterate, since the whole training they received focused on the technical aspects of their profession.[131] A critical approach to music as an art, or the ability to carry on a discussion on matters of musical styles or aesthetic ideas expected in the salons were hard to find among musicians at that time. This is confirmed by instrumental treatises left by seventeenth-century musicians.[132] A certain exception (proving the rule?) was François Couperin, as one can judge from the elaborate prefaces to his *Livres de clavecin.*

It is true that the musical profession in the seventeenth century had its intellectual elite too. For example, René Ouvrard (1624-1694), music director of the Sainte-Chapelle, was an astronomer, theologian, mathematician, as well as a composer and theoretician of music, who left a couple of treatises on music; Sébastien de Brossard was a self-taught musician and savant who is now remembered for his terminological *Dictionnaire de Musique* (1701 and 1703), rather than his compositions; and Bénigne de Bacilly (c. 1625-1690), a composer and teacher, known today mainly for his treatise *Remarques curieuses sur l'art de bien chanter* (1668), devoted to performing practices of the *airs de cour*. But they, too, were absent in Parisian salons. Professional musicians and theoreticians, preoccupied with their narrowly conceived *métier*, could not aspire to be authorities even on musical matters and certainly were not considered as such by their contemporaries. Characteristically, the dispute over French opera that occurred at the end of the seventeenth century and the controversy over French and Italian music throughout the eighteenth century were initiated and carried on by the men of letters, and not the musicians.[133]

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[130] As quoted by David Allen Duncan, "Persuading the Affections: Rhetorical Theory and Mersenne's Advice to Harmonic Orators," in *French Musical Thought, 1600-1800*, ed. by Georgia Cowart (Ann Arbor and London: UMI Research Press), p. 162.

[131] See Benoit, *Versailles et les musiciens du Roi*, pp. 80-82.

[132] For example, Michel de La Barre's *Mémoire sur les musettes et hautbois* (c. 1702?); Jean Rousseau's *Traité de la viole* (1687); Jacques-Martin Hotteterre's *Principles de la flûte traversière* (1707), are preoccupied mainly with technical problems. See also: Norbert Dufourcq, "Quarante années de musicologie," *XVIIe siècle* 139 (avril/juin 1983), p. 202, n. 6.

The professional and social composition of eighteenth-century Parisian salons also reflected the existing hierarchies and demonstrates the social conservatism of the salonnières. The core of the habitués of the major salons of the time was composed of literary men and intellectuals of various sorts, both based in Paris and visiting it, joined at times by *gens de monde*. The division between these two major groups, practiced by some salonnières and discussed above, goes beyond obvious "practical" reasons and suggests that salon women did not attempt to violate the existing social and professional hierarchies. Men of letters inherited their place in salons from the *grand siècle*. The intellectuals, according to one present-day scholar, gained respect in French society because they satisfied a social need for the clarification and reinterpretation of social values and for concrete commentary on "social problems" at a time when social morality was in a state of change and confusion. The traditional religious-aristocratic *Weltanschauung* was threatened by the new rationalistic outlook, of which the intellectuals were partly the creators and partly the interpreters.[134]

They played this new role within the old structures: either state-controlled, such as academies, or self-controlled, such as salons. Salons and academies, although otherwise vastly different from each other, worked out a modus vivendi: while for the academicians attending salons provided an opportunity for contact with the general public, for the salonnières academicians were a source of prestige. At the beginning of the eighteenth century the Académie had an impeccable reputation as an institution gathering loyal supporters of the established order. It was at this time that Mme de Lambert set the precedent of a salonnière intriguing to place her literary protegés in the *Académie Française*,[135] a tradition that became typical for eighteenth-century Parisian salons run by women.[136] She was said to have supported Montesquieu's election to the Académie, among many other less prominent literary men whom she hosted in her salon. In her ambition to influence the composition of the Académie by placing her protegés there, she was followed by Mme de Tencin, the duchesse du Maine, Mme du Deffand, Mme Geoffrin, Mlle de Lespinasse, and Mme Necker.[137]

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[133] Among literary men participating in the *querelle* were: Charles et Claude Perrault, La Bruyère, Fontenelle, Abbé François de Castagnères Châteauneuf, and Houdar de la Motte; in the first dispute over French and Italian music historically the most important were the works of two adversaries engaged in the *querelle*: Abbé Raguenet's *Parallèle des Italiens et des François* (1702), representing the pro-Italian view, and Lecerf de La Viéville's *Comparaison de la musique italienne et de la musique françoise* (1704-1706), defending the pro-French standpoint. None of these authors was a musician.

[134] Elinor G. Barber, *The Bourgeois in 18th century France* (Princeton University Press, 1973), pp. 130-131; see also Roger Picard, *Les salons littéraires et la société française, 1610-1789* (New York: Brentano's, 1943), pp. 138-139; Marguerite Glotz and Madeleine Maire, *Salons du XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Hachette, 1945), pp. 21-22.

Although to a lesser degree, Mme de Lambert also seemed to have been interested in the careers of the painters of her time and is reported to have received Antoine Watteau, Jean-Marc Nattier and Hyacinthe Rigaud.[138] Her follower, Mme de Tencin, showed a similar interest and among her Monday guests were Carle van Loo, Claude-Joseph Vernet, François Le Moyne, Maurice Quentin de La Tour, and architect Jacques Germain Soufflot.[139] Mme Geoffrin, too, received painters, including Charles Nicolas Cochin, Joseph-Marie Vien, François Boucher, Maurice Quentin de La Tour, Joseph Vernet, Jean-Louis-François Lagrenée, Jean Baptiste Greuze, François-Hubert Drouais, Carle Van Loo, Hubert Robert; as well as art collectors, such as Ange-Laurent de La Live de Jully, Pierre-Jean Mariette and Claude-Henri Watelet. She was not only their hostess, but also their patron: her collection of pictures included sixty-nine canvasses by Carle Van Loo, Honoré Fragonard, Hubert Robert, Jean-Louis-François Lagrenée, Jean Baptiste Greuze, François Boucher, François-Hubert Drouais, Pierre Guérin, Robert Lefèvre, Jean Baptiste Leprince, Jean Baptiste Oudry, Claude-Joseph Vernet, Joseph-Marie Vien and Mme Vien.[140]

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[135] As Hénault put it, "Il fallait passer par elle [Mme de Lambert] pour arriver à l'Académie française; on y lisait les ouvrages prêts à paraitre." *Mémoires du Président Hénault*, ed. by François Rousseau (Paris, 1911; Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1971), p. 120.

[136] Neither the salon of Helvétius nor that of d'Holbach intrigued to affect the composition of the Académie.

[137] André Cazes, *Grimm et les Encyclopédistes* (Paris: Les Presses Universitaires de France, 1933), p. 352; Craveri, pp. 144-145; Catherine Charlotte, Lady Jackson, *The Old Régime in France: the Court, Salons and Theatres* (New York: Seaside Library, 1882), Part I, p. 18. Part I; p. 18.

[138] De Broglie, "Les mardis et les mercredis de la Marquise de Lambert," p. 328.

[139] André Cazes, *Grimm et les Encyclopédistes* (Paris: Les Presses Universitaires de

As opposed to their concern for the careers of the literary men, and to a certain degree of the painters, the eighteenth-century salonnières appear to have been completely uninterested in patronizing musicians. Typically for contemporary Parisian ways of getting acquainted with important persons, Mozart, who first time came to Paris at the age of eight as a child prodigy, played in Mme Geoffrin's salon.[141] Later she recommended him to her friend in Vienna, Maria Theresa's Prime Minister, the prince von Kaunitz, but there is no evidence that Mozart's further career was one of Mme Geoffrin's concerns. In 1778, when Mozart visited Paris again, he played at the salon of Mme d'Epinay, the duchesse de Chabot and some others,[142] but any consistent patronage did not develop either. Although during the reign of Louis XVI (1774-1789) women formed the majority of persons to whom musical pieces were dedicated in Paris, the famous eighteenth-century salonnières were not among the addressees of musical pieces.[143]

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France, 1933), p. 339.

[140] See Morellet, *Mémoires*, I, p. 85; Marmontel, *Mémoires*, I, 160; Pierre Sègur, *La royaume de la rue Saint-Honoré* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1897), Appendix; Barbara Scott, “Madame Geoffrin: a patron and friend of artists,” *Apollo* (February 1967), pp. 98-103; Mme Geoffrin paid Van Loo 6,000 *livres* for the *Spanish Conversation* (1754) p. 42. See Philip Conisbee, *Painting in eighteenth-century France* (Oxford: Phaidon, 1981), p. 42.

[141] Marquis de Ségur in his *Le royaume de la rue Saint-Honoré* writes that Mme Geoffrin received other musicians too, but he supports his statement only by mentioning Rameau and young Mozart; pp. 50-75.

[142] *The Letters of Mozart and his Family*, ed. E. Anderson (New York & London: Norton, 1985), pp. 516-31.

[143] Anne Chastel, “Etude sur la vie musicale à Paris à travers la presse pendant le règne de Louis XVI,” *“Recherches” sur la musique française classique* 17 (1977), pp. 118-49.

The exclusion of professional musicians from the circle of regular guests of the most reputable eighteenth-century Parisian salons was not only a result of their allegedly more "intellectual" focus (as the presence of the painters suggests) but rather a reflection of the social prejudices of salon women, inherited from the previous century. The image of a professional musician, according to traditional salon philosophy, was a hired entertainer, by no means able to match the "enlightening" role of intellectuals and men of letters. Where the same circle of men of letters was usually gathered around one or two different salons, musicians circulated among many of them without any commitment. Even musicians employed on a regular basis in private orchestras customarily played at various venues outside them. A typical attitude of a mid-eighteenth century salonnière toward a musician was exemplified by Mme d'Epinay in her *Memoirs*. "I know a number of good houses where he is received"—wrote Mme d'Epinay in 1751 about Pierre Jélyotte, a highly esteemd and fashionable *haute-contre* who often sang at supper parties in Parisian houses.

> He is really the most agreeable company: he talks well, and has quite the grand manner without being a coxcomb: it is only that he adopts a tone above his station. I really feel sure that he would manage to make one forget that station, were he not bound to publish it three times a week.[144]

Jélyotte, a musician, was not supposed to "adopt a tone above his station" (as nobody would in the eighteenth century), even if he was "the best singer in his own genre,"[145] had "grand manners," and was received in a number of "good houses." Musical talent and public recognition did not broaden the narrow limits within which contemporary salon society allowed a musician to function. Musicians could not yet enjoy social equality through their art. This same society was more tolerant when a man of letters was concerned. While most of the eminent salon women of the period were closely allied to men of letters or philosophes, for example, Mme du Deffand and Président Hénault (later Horace Walpole), Mme d'Epinay and Grimm, Mlle de

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[144] *Mémoirs and Correspondence of Madame d'Epinay* (London: George Routledge & Sons, Ltd., 1930), pp. 99-100.

[145] Ancelet [pseud.?], *Observations sur la musique, les musiciens, et les instruments* (Amsterdam, 1757; Genève: Minkoff, 1984), pp. 30-31.

Lespinasse and d'Alembert, a liaison between a salon woman and a musician, no matter how famous he was, would never take place because it was socially unacceptable. Mme d'Epinay emphasized that in her conversation with a friend, Mme de Jully, who was infatuated with Jélyotte:

> Madame de Jully: "I am in love, as I have told you. Do you know with whom?"
> Madame d'Epinay: "No, indeed, is he Maurepaire?"
> Madame de Jully: "No, he's Jélyotte."
> Madame d'Epinay: "Jélyotte! You don't mean it, sister! An operatic singer! A man for all the world to stare at, and whom you cannot decently have as a friend!"
> . . .
> Madame de Jully: ". . . tell me, is not Jélyotte an estimable man? Does not everyone consider him above his station?"
> Madame d'Epinay: "Yes, and that very statement condemns you. Society will never condone it."[146]

A professional composer did not fare much better in salons than a performer and being a composer did not ensure a social position comparable to that of a literary man. André Grétry (1741-1813), a successful operatic composer, gave evidence of that when, in 1768, he refused at first to collaborate with Marmontel because of a condescending tone adopted by the littérateur when talking with him.[147] Mme de Genlis receiving professional musicians in her salon at the end of the eighteenth century was considered by the duchesse d'Abrantès "rather unusual in high society."[148] "Elle [Mme de Genlis] rassemblait chez elle des savants, des artistes, chose alors encore assez inusitée dans la haute compagnie."[149] The duchesse did not have in mind musical celebrities supported by the establishment, such as Gluck, who was occasionally invited to the Parisian salons in his high days, but less prominent professional composers, instrumentalists and singers, whose social position was still rather low, regardless of their fame and recognition in professional circles.

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[146] Mme d'Epinay, *Memoirs and Correspondence*, pp. 122-123.

[147] See A. E. M. Grétry, *Réflexions d'un Solitaire*, 4 vols., ed. by Lucien Solvay and Ernest Classon (Bruxelles, 1919-1922; New York: AMS Press, 1978), II, "Appendice à mes Mémoires ou Essais sur la musique," pp. 96-115.

[148] Among musicians received by Mme de Genlis were violinists Cramer and Jarnowitz; a cellist Duport; an Italian singer Albanezi; Mademoiselle Baillon, a pianist and composer of the opera *Fleur d'épine*.

[149] [Laure Junot] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Histoire des salons de Paris, tableaux et portraits du grand monde sous Louis XVI, le Directoire, le Consulat et l'Empire, la Restauration et le règne de Louis-Philippe Ier*, 6 vols. (Paris: Ladvocat, 1836-1838), II, p. 172.

Salons did gather people of various social origins, a unique practice in pre-Revolutionary France. However, this policy had its limits and salons can hardly be seen as levelling social differences. The salonnières were trapped between their endeavours to break the monopoly of the hereditary nobility and to extend the cultural audience (which they primarily needed to provide legitimacy to themselves), and keeping this policy exclusive to make the inclusion desirable (which was the salons' *raison d'être*). Even if they did not make noble birth a criterion of entry into their salons, they operated within the framework of honnêteté, imposing restrictions based on observing the traditional social hierarchies. The semantic field of the adjectives "bourgeois(e)" and "roturier(e)" shifted from the literal meaning indicating social origin towards the lack of (honnête) manners, and so reflected the socially degrading slant of these adjectives. It was not wrong to *be* a "bourgeois(e)" but to *behave* like one.

## The Salonnière as a Moral Conservative

As discussed in Chapter I, the respect for traditional moral values was inherent in honnêteté and resulted from the general assumption that an honnête person should accept the society he lives in and its moral norms. According to this, Mlle de Scudéry believed that, once married, a woman should respect her condition, and Mme de Lambert advised her daughter to comply with the rules of feminine bienséance. Honnêteté itself imposed the ways of practicing the traditional moral values: exaggeration (including virtue and devotion) was excluded in favour of moderation and juste-milieu. Honnêteté, assuming the proper measure and equilibrium, did not allow one to renounce completely either religion or the worldly life.

The idea of compatibility between traditional morals and the mondaine life appealed to Parisian salon women, as it allowed them to function publicly within the confines of the societal norms of the time; that is, to pursue their intellectual and social ambitions without losing their reputations.

It is significant that it was a religious movement, Jansenism, that attracted some seventeenth-century women with social and intellectual ambitions, such as Mme de Sablé. Père Rapin wrote in his *Mémoire* that "Cependant on ne parloit que de Saint Augustin dans les ruelles. Il n'y avoit point de femme d'esprit que ne se piquât de dire ses sentiments sur la grâce et sur la prédestination, qui sont des mystères aux plus grands théologiens."[150] As one scholar put it,

> The Augustianism that dominated religious thought in the latter part of the seventeenth century was admirably suited to reflect and reinforce the disillusionment of salon society after the Fronde. Augustianism can be interpreted to confirm the corruption of mind by matter in a way that Thomist thought could not; it was consonant with the reaction against Neo-Stoic optimism, and it furnished a justification for the debacle to which willful self-affirmation had led.[151]

Linda Timmermans argued that Jansenism succeeded among the mondaine public because, on the one hand, it was not reserved for the specialists (savants) and, on the other, that piety was considered a virtue absolutely necessary for women.[152] It became fashionable to be pious, wrote Père Rapin about the origins of the Port-Royal, and the example came from above: ". . . la reine [Anne d'Autriche] devenoit dévote, et qu'il ne paroissoit point à la cour d'autres partis pour les femmes, il n en avoit peu qui ne pensassent à se rendre considérables par là."[153]

Whereas the adherence to Jansenism was considered by some contemporary observers a transgression of feminine bienséance (as any "excessive" interest in religious doctrine would be), a desire to distinguish oneself, and to belong to the intellectual and moral elite,[154] it was a "transgression" in a social rather than moral sense. Women might have been interested in "heretical" religious doctrines, but they were never atheistic. Moreover, adherence to Jansenism did not put women's reputation in danger since it advocated moral purity, as opposed to the précieuses, typically accused of moral laxity.

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[150] Réné Rapin, *Mémoire du P. René Rapin de la Compagnie de Jésus sur l'Eglise et la société, la cour, la ville et la jansénisme*, 3 vols., ed. by Léon Aubineau (Paris: Gaume Frères et J. Duprey, 1865), I, p. 62.

[151] Vivien Thweatt, *La Rochefoucauld and the Seventeenth-century Concept of the Self*(Genève: Librairie Droz, 1980), p. 69.

[152] Timmermans, *L'accès des femmes à la culture*, pp. 762-763.

[153] Rapin, *Mémoires*, I, p. xi.

Most importantly, however, women's adherence to Jansenism seems to have been limited by the principles of honnêteté, which discouraged exaggeration both in intellectual curiosity and in piety. Rapin believed that the interest of Parisian women in Jansenism was superficial and their devotion not sincere: Jansenism attracted primarily aging women, he wrote, those who had no other chance to attract attention than by their "extravagant" interests. Moreover, Rapin continued, Parisian women were not pure Jansenists (to the point of rejecting the world as a source of corruption). "For the good Jansenist the 'world' offered too many diversions capable of turning his mind from God and thereby removing him from the state of grace"—Dale van Kley has reminded us recently. "Jansenist 'conversions' therefore typically resulted in the cessation of all secular activity and an ascetic retreat from the world."[155] Women were particularly attracted to Jansenism, as another scholar has argued, because Jansenists represented affirmation of the equal value of women and men as human beings and allowed women to share in the concerns, contributions to, and rewards of society along with men.[156] It was not religious doctrine, then, that attracted women to Jansenism; it was a more relaxed and more inclusive structure that offered them promotion.[157]

The case of Mme de Sablé is instructive. According to her biographer, it was not religious conviction, but financial problems and approaching old age that were the principal reasons that made Mme de Sable seek retirement in the Port-Royal.[158] A contemporary observer, Tallement des Réaux, was also sceptical about the purity of the intentions of Mme de Sablé and wrote that she was involved in every intrique and would not miss the opportunity to be a Jansenist.[159] The Port-Royal itself was not a discouraging place either: " . . . [il était] un lieu de pénitence muni d'appareils rien moins qu'ascetique: d'une cuisine exquise et d'une pharmacie, qui était à ce qu'il parait le dernier mot de la science du temps."[160]

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[154] Timmermans, *L'accès des femmes à la culture*, pp. 697-699. Timmermans also argues that Jansenist religious women were not really involved in the intellectual aspects of Jansenism. *Ibid.*, p. 786.

[155] Dale van Kley, *The Jansenists and the Expulsion of the Jesuits from France* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1975), p. 10.

[156] F. Ellen Weaver, "Erudition, Spirituality, and Women: The Jansenist Contribution," in: *Women in Reformation and Counter-Reformation Europe. Public and Private Worlds*, ed. by Sherrin Marshall (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1989), p. 190.

[157] Elizabeth Rapley, *The Dévotes. Women and Church in Seventeenth-Century France* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1990), p. 16.

These contentions are supported by the facts from Mme de Sablé's life. Despite her involvement in Jansenism, Mme de Sablé never burned her bridges behind her; she wanted both to retain her status as a salonnière and to enter a convent.[161] Chapelain wrote in September 1640, shortly after Mme de Sablé's "conversion" to Jansenism, that she "est penitente, mais ne laisse pas d'estre raisonable, et sa dévotion n'a pas estouffé l'amour de la société."[162] In a symbolic manner, her apartment in Port-Royal reflected this orientation both towards the *monde* and religious life: it could have been entered both from de La Bourbe street and from the convent.[163] As the Abbé d'Ailly put it in his preface to the *Maximes* of Mme de Sablé, "elle y avoit si bien trouvé cette parfaite union de toutes les vertus de la société civile avec les vertus chrétiennes qu'elle était également respectée des solitaires et des gens du monde."[164]

At the moment of confrontation, however, she chose to remain a salonnière rather than follow the exigencies of the religious doctrine: she did not join those nuns who remained faithful to Jansenism and refused to sign the Formulary.[165] During the dispute between the Jansenists and the Catholic Church Mme de Sablé mediated between the two parties in the name of moderation and reconciliation, avoiding taking any extreme position. Although her sympathies for Jansenists waned as she realized the stiffness of their position, she never completely renounced Jansenism.[166] While the nuns faithful to Jansenism were subsequently removed from Port-Royal and excommunicated in 1664, Mme de Sablé never lost her retreat and remained in Port-Royal until her death. Moreover, she established a cordial relationship with the new abbess (*abbesse intruse*). At the time of her death, Mme de Sablé was perceived by the Abbess Angelique Arnauld as nothing other than "amie très-particulière et bienfaitrice de nôtre Maison de Paris."[167]

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[158] Nicola Ivanoff, *La Marquise de Sablé et son salon* (Paris: Les Presses Modernes, 1927), pp. 63-64.

[159] *Ibid.*, p. 29.

[160] *Ibid.*

[161] Ivanoff noted that "Les Maximes de Mme de Sablé releèvent à la fois de son jansénisme et de sa préciosité." *Ibid.*, p. 179.

[162] Chapelain, *Lettres de Jean Chapelain de l'Académie Française*, I, p. 695.

[163] Jean Lafond "Madame de Sablé et son salon," *L'homme et son image. Morales et littérature de Montaigne à Mandeville* (Paris: Honoré Champion, Editeur, 1996), p. 254.

[164] Preface of Abbé d'Ailly to the 1865 edition of the *Maximes* of Mme de Sablé, as quoted by Lafond, "Madame de Sablé et son salon," p. 264.

[165] As Vivien Thweatt suggested, the conflict was very much a reflection of

In fact, Mme de Sablé, with her rather moderate involvement in Jansenism, represents an extreme case of a "transgression" of a salonnière against traditional religion. It was Catholicism proper that unified the country and legitimized its social and political order. Her successors, both seventeenth- and eighteenth-century salonnières, did not venture to depart in a similar way and let themselves "transgress" at the furthest by having illicit love affairs. But even such transgressions took place before these women opened their salons, not after they had became salonnières, as best demonstrated by Mme du Deffand and Mme de Tencin, and what was "illicit" about love affairs was a matter of social rather than moral norms. (Ironically, shortly before she opened her salon, Mme du Deffand had "renounced" her past by entering into a "reputable" liaison with Président Hénault. A "fallen woman" regained the respect of polite society through a relationship with a man accepted in society, and her former "mistakes" were forgiven.)

Madame de Lambert, who bridged the type of salon sociability initiated by the marquise de Rambouillet with that of the *siècle des Lumières*, maintained close contacts

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seventeenth-century mentality: "Jansenism was a semantic phenomenon as well as a religious and a quasi-political one. Indeed, the refusal to sign Formulary was based on a legalistic quarrel over the meaning of words. . . . The refusal of the Jansenists to sign the Formulary was based on the claim that the five condemned propositions were not actually stated in the *Augustinus*. *La Rochefoucauld and the Seventeenth-century Concept of Self*, p. 44.

[166] *Ibid.*, pp. 79-85.

[167] Angelique Arnauld d'Andilly *et al.*, *Nécrologe de l'abbaie de Nôtre Dame de Port-Roial des Champs . . .* (Amsterdam: Nicolas Potgieter, 1723), as quoted by Lafond

with Jesuit moralists, especially with the priest Claude Buffier, with whom she consulted on her literary projects.[168] The cooperation was mutually advantageous: while Mme de Lambert obtained guidance to accommodate the traditional moral norms into the *science du monde*, Buffier could practice in her salon his beliefs in the compatibility of mondaine life with religious precepts.[169]

It could be a matter of social and pragmatic rather than moral norms to reconcile traditional religious precepts with salon sociability. As one author noticed, "Mme de Lambert se plaçait moins au point de vue de l'orthodoxie religieuse que de la convenance morale, de la bienséance mondaine."[170] The argument against incredulity which Mme de Lambert offers to her son is strictly pragmatic: "Ceux même qui ne sont pas assez heureux pour croire comme ils doivent, se soumettent à la Religion établie; ils savent que ce qui s'appelle préjugé tient un grand rang dans le monde, et qu'il faut le respecter."[171] Similarly, the metaphor, "[on doit] s'envelopper du manteau de la religion," which Mme de Lambert uses in the *Avis* written for her daughter reveals moral pragmatism.[172]

The reconciliation of the traditional religious precepts with salon sociability was what society expected from a salonnière in exchange for allowing her to pursue her social and intellectual ambitions. As noticed by Jeffrey W. Merrick, the word *police* in the vocabulary of the Old Regime "referred not to the personnel responsible for the maintainance of law and order but to the broad range of administrative functions they fulfilled." An analysis of eighteenth-century treatises on *police* suggests, continues Merrick, that "the *police* of the kingdom involved not only concern for safety, health, and industry of subjects but also surveillance of their obedience, orthodoxy, and morality."[173]

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"Madame de Sablé et son salon," p. 249.

[168] Marchal, *Madame de Lambert et son milieu*, p. 244.

[169] See his *Traité de la société civile, et du moyen de se rendre heureux, en contribuant au bonheur des personnes avec qui l'on vit* (Paris: Giffart, 1726).

[170] M. de Lescure, Introduction to *Oeuvres morales de la Mise de Lambert. Précédées d'une étude critique par M. de Lescure* (Paris: Librairie des Bibliophiles, 1883), p. xxii.

[171] *Avis d'un mère à son fils*, in *Oeuvres de Madame la Marquise de Lambert* (Lausanne: Marc-Michel Bosquet, 1748), p. 16.

[172] *Avis d'une mère à sa fille*, *Ibid.*, p. 58.

[173] Jeffrey W. Merrick, *The Desacralization of the French Monarchy in the Eighteenth Century* (Baton Rouge and London: Louisiana University Press, 1990), p. 27.

The meaning of the word *police* also was linked by more than one author in the Old Regime to sociability (through *l'homme poli* and *l'hommé policé*),[174] and specifically to salon sociability by typically describing salonnières as guardians of propriety.

Religion, argues Merrick, figured prominently in discussions of *police*. He quotes the royal councillor Réal de Curban who declared categorically that "people who have no religion are at the same time without *police*, without genuine subordination and completely uncivilized."[175] Another author argued that "if religion alone were well observed, all the other parts of the *police* would be fulfilled."[176] As in theories of honnêteté, religion was perceived in this-wordly perspective as socially and politically beneficial.

Where salonnières might allow some discussions on religious matters, they excluded overtly atheistic rallies from their salons. Mme du Deffand received Helvétius before he published his *De l'esprit* in 1758, but not after that.[177] A comment, attributed to her, that *De l'esprit* upset everyone so much because Helvétius had revealed what was everyone's secret, suggests that she got the message of the book. It did not, however, prevent her from joining those who rejected it. After Marmontel's novel *Bélisaire* (1766) was condemned on the grounds that it preached religious indifference, Mme Geoffrin refused him accommodation in her house (which he had enjoyed for some time) to avoid comment that she put up with a censored author.[178]

It was because of their violation of the principles of honnêteté, including moral ones, that Mme du Deffand declared her aversion to philosophes and savants in a letter of November 1765 to the poet Thomas Gray:

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[174] See, for example, Daniel Gordon, *Citizens without Sovereignty*, pp. 72-73 (also Chapter I and II); Peter France, *Politeness and Its Discontents. Problems in French Classical Culture* (Cambridge University Press, 1992), pp. 60-64.

[175] Merrick, *The Desacralization*, p. 27.

[176] Nicolas Delamare, *ibid.*, p. 28.

[177] *De l'esprit* was published on 27 July 1758. On 10 August, the Coucil of the State revoked the license for its publication; this was followed by fulminations from the Archbishop of Paris on 22 November, and Pope Clement XIII on 31 January 1759. See Arthur M. Wilson, *Diderot* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1972), p. 311.

[178] Marmontel, *Mémoires*, I, p. 262.

> Les *savants*, je leur demande pardon, les *philosophes* sont insupportables, superficiels, arrogants et fanatiques; ils ne font que prêcher, et leur doctrine avouée est l'athéisme, vous ne pouvez croire à quel point ils se gênent peu. Ne vous étonnez donc pas si je reviens tout à fait jésuite. Voltaire lui-même ne les satisfait point: une de leurs devotes disait de lui: *Il est bigot, il est déiste.*[179]

Earlier the same year, she informed another correspondent in England that a characteristic feature of a philosophe is hostility to religion and to the royal power.

> Ne comprenez-vous pas ce que c'est que les philosophes, ou ce qu'on appelle ainsi en France? D'abord cette désignation comprend à peu près tout le monde, ensuite elle s'attache particulièrement à des hommes qui, en déclarant la guerre au papisme, tendent, au moins beaucoup d'entre nous, au renversement de toute religion, et un plus grand nombre encore à la destruction du pouvoir royal.[180]

In those salons where the philosophes were received, their religious views and those of the salonnières seem to belong to two separate spheres which did not influence each other. Mme Geoffrin, for example, remained Catholic despite the at times subversive views of her guests, many of whom were involved in writing the *Encyclopédie*. As La Harpe put it, she had her own confessor, in contrast to most of those she received.[181] The duchesse d'Abrantès wrote about Mme Geoffrin's attitude to Diderot: "Madame Geoffrin l'estimait, l'aimait à sa manière même; mais elle ne se commettait pas pour lui, et ne faisait jamais voir qu'elle partageât en aucune manière ses opinions, quoiqu'elle fêt assez souvent de même avis avec lui."[182] The guests of the marquise de Créquy included d'Alembert, Chamfort, Sénac de Meilhan, and Roubaud, but, as writes Feuillet de Conches, "Au mielieu des philosophes, la marquise avouait hautement ses idées religieuses."[183] Similarly, Mme Necker, when reproached by her Swiss friends for associating with the philosophes known for their indifference or even hostility to religion, energetically refuted such accusations:

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[179] Letter of 19 November 1765 to the poet Thomas Gray, as quoted by Feuillet de Conches, *Les salons de conversation*, pp. 70-71.

[180] Letter of 28 October 1765 to the honorable N. S. Conway, in *ibid.*, p. 71.

[181] La Harpe, *Correspondance*, I, p. 244.

[182] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Une soirée chez Mme Geoffrin* (Paris: Librairie de Dumont, 1837), p. 148.

[183] Feuillet de Conches, *Les salons de conversation du dix-huitième siècle*, p. 77.

> Je vois quelques gens de lettres; mais comme je me suis hâtée de leur montrer mes principes, on ne touche jamais à cet article chez moi. A mon âge, avec ma maison agréable, rien n'est si aisé que de donner le ton . . . Je vis, il est vrai, au milieu d'un grand nombre d'athées; mais leurs arguments n'ont jamais même effleuré mon esprit, et, s'ils ont été jusqu'à mon coeur, ce n'a été que pour le faire frémir d'horreur.[184]

Some other time, writes the Viscount d'Haussonville, she responded: "J'ai des amis athées, pourquoi non? Ce sont des amis malheureux."[185] In reality, as with Mme Geoffrin, Mme Necker was a serious Catholic and by no means was she guilty of sharing religiously subversive views of her "amis malheureux." Grimm's *Correspondance littéraire*, too, reported that "Hypatie Necker," despite her connections with the philosophes, was "dévote à sa manière."[186]

### The Salonnière as an Aesthetic Conservative

As discussed in the previous Chapter, honnêteté represented the liberal approach to the classical aesthetic doctrine, as opposed to the dogmatic one, and only in this perspective can salon women be considered supporters of the moderns in the quarrel of the ancients and the moderns at the end of the seventeenth century. Similarly, salon women are not to be seen as unqualified supporters of the moderns. It was Nicolas Boileau, a noted poet and royal historiographer, and his *Satire X* (1694) attacking Parisian women for their support of the moderns, which made present-day scholars generalize that Parisian salonnières took the side of the moderns in the quarrel,[187] and that honnêteté, too, is to be identified with the moderns.[188] On the other hand, it was Charles Perrault and his response to Boileau, the *Apologie des femmes*, defending women against Boileau's charges, that added to this picture.

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[184] Vicomte d'Haussonville, *Le salon de Madame Necker d'après des documents tirés des archives de Coppet*, 2 vols. (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1882), I, p. 164.

[185] *Ibid.*, p. 165.

[186] Frederick Melchior Grimm, *Correspondance litteraire, philosophique et critique*, ed. by Maurice Tourneux, 16 vols. (Paris: Garnier, 1877-1882), IX, p. 167; see also d'Haussonville, *Le salon de Mme Necker*, I, p. 122.

[187] For example, Antoine Adam, Introduction to Jean Boileau, *Oeuvres complètes* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), p. xxiv.

But Boileau was much more specific in his attack and he did not aim it against the judgement of "honnête" women, but rather against those he considered savantes and précieuses. Boileau aimed his attack at women who were not considered authorities in matters of taste because they transgressed against honnêteté. This same author had nothing against women and their judgement, as long as they were honnête. Rather, the opposite was true: in 1667 he used to read his works in the salons of Mme de La Sablière and Mme de La Fayette; he also read in the Parisian salons at the beginning of the 1670s fragments of his *Art poétique* which was admired by both men and women of the highest rank and closest to the court (Mme de Thianges, Mme de Sévigné).[189] The work, which appeared in July 1674, did not lay the classic principles (as is often believed), but was a reaction to the "abuse" of classic principles and initiated the controversy between the ancients and the moderns.

In fact, there is not enough evidence to maintain that seventeenth-century Parisian salonnières were unqualified supporters of the moderns and this view sounds more like a generalization from the seventeenth-century criticism against women as supporting all kinds of novelties and fashions, rather than an inference from historical evidence. In the preface to her novel *Ibrahim* (1641) Mlle de Scudéry appeared as a supporter of the classical doctrine when she advocated the necessity of following the rules specific for each art; for a novel, the rule of vraisemblance was the most necessary: " . . . il faut regarder le monde comme un peintre regarde son modele quand il trauaille"—was Mlle de Scudéry's opinion in the matter. Following the *Art Poétique* by Horace, she considered the genre of an historical novel superior; however, to facilitate its reading, she deliberately introduced the mentality of her contemporaries. The main purpose of a novel was, in Mlle de Scudéry's opinion, to instruct and elevate a reader; virtue had to triumph and vice be punished.[190] The literary rules were the rules of honnêteté for Mlle de Scudéry and the juste-milieu was as important in life as it was in literature:

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[188] For example, Jean-Pierre Dens, *L'honnête homme et la critique du goût. Esthetique et société au XVIIe siècle* (Lexington, Kentucky: French Forum Publishers, 1981).

[189] Adam, Introduction to Boileau, *Oeuvres complètes*, p. xviii.

> Les choses merueilleuses bien loin d'estre deffendues, sont necessaires, pourueu qu'elles n'arriuent pas trop souuent, & qu'elles produisent de beaux effets, & il n'y a que les choses bizzares ou impossibles qui soient absolument condamnées. Car le moyen d'estre persuadé de rien quand on a une fois trouué des choses qu'on ne peut croire.[191]

Consequently, an ideal novel was an incarnation of perfect honnêteté:

> toutes les petites choses . . . sont placées à propos, . . . l'imagination y soit tousiours soumise au iugement, . . . la galanterie soit partout ou il en faut, . . . le stile n'en soit ni trop esleué ni trop bas & . . . nul endroit la bienseance ni les bonnes moeurs n'y soient blessées.[192]

In her novel *Clélie* (1654-60) Mlle de Scudéry explicitly declared herself against the purely hedonistic aesthetic advocated by the moderns. The object of poetry, writes de Scudéry, is "plutot d'exciter la tendresse et de toucher le coeur que de plaire et de divertir" and she demands "des vers nombreux et naturels" which have "encore plus de passion que d'esprit."[193]

And yet, Mlle de Scudéry cannot be identified with the ancients either. As noted earlier, Mme Dacier, not Mlle de Scudéry, could be (and was), but Mme Dacier was considered savante and pedantic in polite circles. Thus the whole question as to whether Parisian women sided with the moderns or with the ancients seems to be pointing in the wrong direction. By equating aesthetic norms with those of honnêteté, Mlle de Scudéry suggests that the aesthetic choices of an honnête salonnière were not autonomous but pragmatic and were made according to the norms of honnêteté. One could follow this suggestion further and argue that this may be seen not only in the preferences within literary genres (as Mlle de Scudéry's) but also in the exclusion of some arts occupying an inferior place in the existing hierarchy of arts (precisely because they could not be codified and interpreted within the neoclassicial doctrine to the same extend as literature could be) and having an ambiguous moral valorization. This very exclusion is what I will discuss in the following section on the example of the place of music in Parisian salons.

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[190] Arpad Steiner, "Les idées esthetiques de Mlle de Scudéry," *Romanic Review* 16 (1925), p. 181.

[191] Preface to *Ibrahim*, p. 1130; as quoted by Steiner, "Les idées esthetiques de Mlle de Scudéry," p. 179.

[192] *Ibid.*, p. 181.

[193] *Ibid.* As noticed by René Bray, "Elle devraient ouvrir les yeaux sur l'etrange erreur qui confond les précieuses avec les coquettes et sur l'aberration plus grave qui décuvre une même esthétique chez les écrivains précieux et chez les plus extravagants des baroques." *La formation de la doctrine classique en France* (Lausanne: Payot & Cie, 1931), p. 134.

In comparison with literature, the place of music in seventeenth-century Parisian salons appears rather inconspicuous. A prolific epistolary and literary output produced at that time only occasionally refers to making music in salons. A typical example are the *Historiettes* by François Tallemant des Réaux (1619-1692), who frequented contemporary literary salons, including that of the marquise de Rambouillet, Mlle de Scudéry and Mme de Sablière. The literary works left by salon women themselves are not much different. In her novel *Artamène, ou Le Grand Cyrus* (1649-1653), portraying the most distinguished persons of her time including famous salonnières, Mlle de Scudéry dwells upon musical *divertissements* favoured in France in the seventeenth century, but does not mention musical performances in salons or the musical interests of their hostesses.[194] In the *Célinte* (1661), Mlle de Scudéry portrayed a singer Hilaire Dupuy under the name of Elisaire and a composer, Michel Lambert as Telambre, but limited herself to a short eulogy of the airs composed by Lambert and to both of them singing.[195] Mme de Sévigné, too, in her abundant *Correspondance*, only occasionally reported musical performances in salons which indicates that music occupied a far less important place than literature. [196]

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[194] In the VII volume of *Le Grand Cyrus* Mlle de Scudéry described at great length Angélique Paulet, ("Histoire d'Elise"), a famous singer and lute player (d. 1660) and a favourite of Mme de Rambouillet. Mlle de Scudéry focuses upon various episodes in Angélique's life, mainly her numerous love affairs, but does not say anything about her music: its repertoire, style, and genre.

[195] Mlle de Scudéry, *Célinte, Nouvelle première*, ed. by Alain Niderst (Paris: A.-G. Nizet, 1979), pp. 92-93.

[196] Mme de Sévigné reported about Hilaire Dupuy singing in Madame de La Fayette's salon in November 1673. *Correspondance*, 3 vols., ed. by Roger Duchêne (Paris: Gallimard, 1972-1978), I, p. 613; and Demoiselle Raymond with comtesse du Lude (*ibid.*, I, p. 160); she also heard the lutenist Léonard Ithier and the singer Sébastien Le

Similarly, seventeenth-century salon women were quite passively involved in music in comparison with their literary activity. Contemporary definitions and descriptions of salonnières suggest that the ability to make music was not considered a necessary attribute. What was indispensable was an interest in modern literature—poetry, novels and comedies—an ability to write themselves, a taste for literary discussions within a circle of literary men, and refinement of speech.[197] Although often able to play or sing, as with Mme de Sévigné, salonnières appear primarily as listeners of music rather than performers or composers. With few exceptions, such as Ninon de Lenclos, they are not mentioned among accomplished amateur musicians of the time. From among 251 hostesses of the salon *prétieux* listed by Somaize in his *Le Grand Dictionnaire des Prétieuses*, only a few possessed musical accomplishments the author considered worth mentioning.[198] Salon women did not attempt to write music themselves, as they wrote poetry, novels and letters. As opposed to literary works, it was not the ambition of Parisian salonnières to issue judgements about musical compositions; unlike Corneille, Racine, Boileau, La Fontaine and other writers, contemporary composers do not appear as regulars in salons.

The inconspicuous place of music in seventeenth-century Parisian salons and the limited interest of salon women in music making differed from the reality outside salons, as reported by contemporary sources. In the second half of the century concerts in Parisian homes advanced beyond the traditional entertainment of the court and the aristocracy to a symbol of the cultural aspirations of the social climbers. Jean Loret, in

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Camus performing in salons e.g. in May 1671, *ibid.*, I, p. 243.

[197] For example, Antoine Baudeau de Somaize, *Politique des coquettes* (Paris, 1660), pp. 67-68; ". . . l'on ne peut estre parfaitement coquette sans lire de romans et de vers, sans dire de mots extraordinaires et sans affecter de bien parler . . ." Somaize, *Le Grand Dictionnaire des Pretieuses*, I, pp. 293-294; "[les précieuses] se meslent en escrire ou de corriger ce que les autres escrivent . . . [elles] font leur principal de la lecture des romans, et . . . inventent des façons de parler bizarres par leur nouveauté et exraordinaires dans leurs significations." *Ibid.*, I, p. 23.

[198] "Decebale aima passionément les violons, et . . . tous . . . esclaves [d'Argenice] en jouent fort bien. . . [Aristenie] . . . touche . . . le thuorbe, et Bitrane, son amant, chante fort agréablement et sçait assez bien jouer de la mandolle . . .Belise [et sa soeur] . . . jouent fort bien du luth, et . . . ont une grande habitude à toucher les instrumens."

his *La Muze historique*, reports such concerts in the 1650s[199] and a Parisian monthly, *Mercure galant*, from the late 1670s. "Rien n'est si à la mode que la musique, et c'est aujourd'huy la passion de la pluspart des honnestes gens, et des personnes de qualité"—wrote the *Mercure* in 1688.[200] Popularity of music among the Parisians is further indicated by weekly insertions of printed music in the *Mercure galant*: from December 1677 to 1710, about five hundred airs were published this way.[201]

The increase in the number of private concerts in the Paris of the second half of the seventeenth century is closely related to upward mobility for certain segments of the middle class at that time. While music in a private setting was a traditional entertainment of the social elite, for the newly ennobled and those who aspired to join higher social orders private concerts became a symbol of status, as were manners, attire and the leisured way of life. The phenomenon was common enough to make Molière's *Le bourgeois gentilhomme* (1670) the success of the day. Monsieur Jourdain, a rich bourgeois aspiring to be a gentleman, was advised by his music master to have a concert at home every Wednesday and Thursday, because this was indispensable for a "person of quality." According to the master, it was necessary to have three voices accompanied by the bass viol, theorbo and the clavecin for the basso continuo, and two trebles to play the *ritornelles*.[202] Music was also a useful tool for would-be suitors. "La plupart des femmes aujourd'hui [Molière wrote in 1664] se lissent prendre par les oreilles; elle sont cause que tout le monde se mêle de musique, et l'on ne réussit auprès d'elles que par les petites chansons et les petits vers qu'on leur fait entendre."[203]

The marginal place of music in the interests of Parisian salonnières was also in contrast with the typical image of women (not men) of quality in which playing a musical

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Somaize, *Le Grand Dictionnaire des Prétieuses*, I, pp. 25, 26, and 30.

[199] Jean Loret, *La Muze historique* (Paris: P. Jannet, 1857), 6 October, 1652; 15 April, 1654; 22 September, 1657; 17 November, 1657.

[200] *Mercure galant*, May 1688, p. 204, as quoted by Michel Brenet [pseud. for Marie Bobillier], *Les concerts en France sous l'ancien régime*, 2nd. ed. (New York: Da Capo Press, 1970), p. 110.

[201] Monique Vincent, "Musique et littérature dans le *Mercure galant*," *XVIIe siècle* 163 (April/June 1989), p. 218.

[202] Acte II, sc. I.

instrument for entertainment occupied a prominent place.[204] From the beginning of the seventeenth century lute playing became especially fashionable among ladies and some of them were addressees of contemporary lute collections.[205] Tallemant des Réaux described in his *Historiettes* some consequences of taking lute lessons: a certain Mademoiselle de Champré was seduced at the age of thirteen by her professor of the lute, and one M. de Montbazon at the age of eighty fell in love with a young girl "playing beautifully the lute."[206] François de Grenaille, a historian of the Duc d'Orléans, in his *Les Plaisirs des Dames* (1641), depicted the lute as a typically female attribute, a symbol of femininity, and music in general as more appropriate for women than for men. As opposed to men, women were assumed to be naturally predisposed to make music. Music reinforced femininity, and vice versa, but eventually, wrote de Grenaille, ". . . la beauté des mains & de la bouche des Dames leur donne par un auantage naturel, cet agréement à iouër des instruments que nous n'aquerons qu'avec artifice. On prend plus de plaisir à voir leurs doigts, qu'à ouyr les cords l'un luth . . ."[207]

But this very image linking women with music was dangerously close to another one, linking music (and women) with moral laxity. Such a connection was a leitmotif of the period. For example, an anonymous author [Dupradel] of the *Traité contre le luxe des hommes et des femmes* (1705) criticized mothers who allowed their daughters to occupy themselves with "dance, music, [and] useless visits." These occupations can be

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[203] Molière, *La Princesse d'Elide*, 3me Intermède, sc. II.

[204] According to Gabriel Gilbert, music was one of favourite entertainments of Parisian women: "Ce n'est qu'aux plus beaux art que leur esprit s'applique / les jeux divertissants, la danse, la musique / le lecture des vers et celle des romans / à leurs dans naturels mêlent mille agréments." [Gabriel] Gilbert, *Panegyrique des dames, dedié à Mademoiselle* (Paris: A. Courbé, 1650). p. 23. See also Nicolas Boileau, "Satire X" (1694) in *Oeuvres complètes*, pp. 62-80.

[205] For example, Louis de Rigaud, sieur de Fonlidon, in a dedication of his *Airs mis en tabulature de luth* (1623) to the Maréchale de Thémines, flattered her as the lute player who spends a couple of hours every day mastering her instrument. Lionel de La Laurencie, "Les femmes et le luth en France aux XVIe et XVIIe siècles," *Le Correspondant* (1925), p. 445.

[206] François Lesure, *Music and Art in Society* (University Park and London: The Pennsylvania University Press, 1968), p. 26.

[207] De Grenaille, *Les Plaisirs des Dames*, p. 300.

"dangerous" because they take too much time and are useless. Their uselessness and hidden malignity should be replaced by more serious activities, such as handiwork and reading good books.[208] Although some other authors made it explicit that making music keeps women away from intellectual occupations, both activities could lead to moral corruption if practiced in an excessive way. Music was recommended for women but only for private use, that is, as a form of entertainment and a means to prevent her from more serious pursuits; professional women musicians were surrounded by an aura of moral ambiguity. Thus in either case, music was useless as an occupation for a salonnière.[209] Furthermore, salon hostesses' lack of true social rank (most of them were not noble) did not allow them to get too involved in music; they *had* to be "serious" (according to their own standards), as opposed to ladies with unquestionable noble status. Thus the fear of being labelled a *précieuse*, was joined by the fear of being considered a *coquette* or ridiculous; both carrying equally negative connotations. In practice, despite the fashion among "women of quality" for playing the lute, the most accomplished lute players among Parisian salonnières were only two courtesans: Marion Delorme and Ninon de Lenclos. By mastering the lute, both Marion and Ninon not only followed the current fashion for music making, but also a long tradition according to which making music was considered an indispensable skill for courtesans.[210]

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[208] This does not confirm Wendy Gibson's observation that "Having no visible associations with book-learning and enabling women, as they did, to appear in a graceful and decorative role, musical skills reinforced the traditional image of feminity and could accordingly be cultivated with impunity." *Women in Seventeenth-Century France* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), p. 35.

[209] There is a paradox here: precisely because music was considered a "feminine" occupation it could become a means of emancipation for women: a typically female sphere in which women could achieve an unchallenged self-mastery, as it was not desirable for men to enter it. Salon women chose to claim their share in traditionally male, intellectual and literary, spheres of activity. Ironically, the salon became in practice a "feminine" sphere that did not allow self-mastery but rather a decorative role for women. Thus, salon women replaced one feminine sphere by another; they rejected music as a purely decorative and often ambiguous feminine attribute useless in their pursuits, to play the role of salon hostesses, no less decorative.

[210] For example, Imperia (1481-1512), Tullia d'Aragona, a courtesan of the mid-sixteenth century, and Veronica Franco (d. 1591) were accomplished singers and lute players. Karin Pendle, "Women in Music ca. 1450-1600," in *Women in Music. A History*,

In addition, compared with literature, the position of music in the hierarchy of arts was indeed inferior.[211] Music had no history that could be traced back to Antiquity, no examples of ancient music survived, therefore its reconstruction could be only a matter of academic speculation. Consequently, with the exception of sacred polyphony, mu[illegible] learned tradition, and no learned status comparable to that of literature. According to an anonymous author of *Les Entretiens galants* (1681), music was also the least difficult of all the arts.

> A refined mind with a gift for music and which applies itself to it will always succeed. . . . You may be sure that it is much harder to write our own language than to compose music. The mingling of seven or eight tones is not nearly so difficult as arranging twenty-two or twenty-three letters into an infinite number of words. When two persons of equal intelligence undertake these two very difficult occupations, one will be mediocre in his writing, while the other will excel in musical composition.[212]

The pre-eminence of literature over music was generally unquestioned by seventeenth-century writers on music. The music they dealt with was primarily vocal and its purpose was to emphasize the text. It was through literature that music was viewed, analyzed and evaluated. By analogy with literature, musical imitation consisted of using certain musical figures with ascribed rhetorical meaning.

The primacy of literature over music was reflected in the essentially French conception of the opera as primarily a literary form, expressed in seventeenth-century French opera criticism.[213] *Tragédies lyriques* were viewed entirely through the literary criteria of the tragedies, especially those of Racine. The fact that tragédies lyriques, although based on the texts of tragedies, usually did not observe classical unities and

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ed. by Karin Pendle (Bloomington & Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1991), p. 37.

[211] For a discussion on the superiority of literature over music in seventeenth-century France see, for example, Georges Snyders, *Le goût musical en France aux XVIIe et XVIIIe siècles* (Paris: J. Vrin, 1968), pp. 17-66.

[212] As quoted by Lesure, *Music and Art in Society*, p. 25.

[213] See Alfred Richard Olivier, *The Encyclopedists as Critics of Music* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1947), pp. 3ff; Buford Norman, "Ancients and Moderns, Tragedy and Opera: The Quarrel over *Alceste*," *French Musical Thought, 1600-1800*, pp. 177-196; Nicolas Cronk, "The play of words and music in Molière-Charpentier's *Le*

were focused on spectacular events rather than on the psychological depth of the characters, made them, in the eyes of their critics, responsible for ruining the classic tragedy. Criticism of the tragédies lyriques resulted also from fear that music could diminish the intelligibility of the spoken word. To avoid such consequences, Pierre Corneille confessed in the preface to his *Andromède* (1651) that he had done his best to make music as inconspicuous as possible and had set to music only the least important parts of the text.[214]

The subsequent quarrel between the ancients and the moderns, the defence of *tragédie lyrique*, and most of all the royal support of Lully's operas, helped to establish the position of opera as a separate genre. But there was little disagreement as to the prime importance of text in the genre and not until the Encyclopedists was the music drama's right to independent aesthetic consideration accepted in France.[215]

The criticism of music in connection with the *spectacles* interacted with the principles of honnêteté that referred also to musical interests and accomplishments: an honnête person could study an instrument, but with no pedanticism and vanity. Similarly, music was not supposed to take a central place in seventeenth-century Parisian salons. Lecerf de La Viéville, in his *Comparaison de la musique italienne et de la musique françoise* (1703) argued that in a salon one should ". . . jouer des pièces pour s'amuser soi-même agréablement, ou pour divertir sa Maitresse ou son Ami."[216] Viéville criticized whatever went beyond it, especially ensemble music requiring time-consuming preparations and therefore interfering with conversation, which occupied the central place in salons. Music should be a background for the conversation, and should not attempt to take first place.

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*malade imaginaire*," *French Studies* 47 (January 1993), pp. 6-19.

[214] Pierre Corneille, *Andromède, tragédie representée avec les machines sur le Théâtre Royal de Bourbon* (Rouen: Laurens Maurry, 1651), Préface.

[215] Olivier, *The Encyclopedists as Critics of Music*, p. 10.

[216] [Jean Laurent Lecerf de La Viéville, sieur de Fresneuse], *Comparaison de la musique italienne et de la musique françoise ou en examinant en détails les avantages des spectacles et le mérite des compositeurs des deux nations, on montre quelles sont les vraies beautés de la musique* (1704-1706), 2nd ed. (Bruxelles: François Foppens, 1705-1706; Genève: Minkoff, 1972), 4e dialogue, p. 107.

> La conversation languit: on prie quelqu'un de chanter un Air, on l'écoute & on recommence a causer. S'il avoit proposé d'envoyer chercher une basse de viole, on se seroit séparé. A la fin du repas, dans l'émotion, où le vin & la joye ont mis les conviez, on demande un Air à boire à celui qui a de voix: l'accompagenment auroit là quelque chose de gêné, qui seroit hors de saison. Il sent trop le concert préparé, & même dans les concerts ou l'accompagnement sied le mieux, il y a mille honnêtes gens que l'ennui de la préparation, l'ennui d'entendre des instruments, occupez, embarassez, une demi heure à s'accorder, rebutte par avance. Deux ou trois Airs d'une voix toute seule & qui leur épargneroit l'attente & la contrainte de ce bruyant accompagnement, seroient pour eux une grace très-sensible.[217]

Music making in the salon, as described by Lecerf de la Viéville, did not involve high musical accomplishments, thus suited perfectly an honnête person who should avoid pedanticism. French music, which Viéville considered the incarnation of the classical ideals of regularity, proper balance, and juste-milieu, was also simple and therefore was best suited for honnête persons, who should keep their musical training and interests within the limits of the juste milieu. Unlike its French counterpart, Italian music, savante, unnecessarily complicated, and requiring long training, was not recommended by Viéville for the honnête person.

In fact, seventeenth-century salon women limited their musical accomplishments and allocated music a place in their salons according to the rules of honnêteté. The attitude of Mlle de Scudéry to studying lute playing exemplifies the intellectual ambitions of salon women (albeit limited by feminine bienséance) and their fear of being viewed as mere entertainers in their salons. According to Valentin Conrart, Madeleine received a broad education including writing, orthography, dancing, drawing, and painting, as well as Italian and Spanish.

> Elle eut envie de savoir jouer du luth, et elle en prit quelques leçons avec assez succès; mais comme c'est un exercice où il faut donner un grand temps, quoique ce ne soit qu'un pur divertissement et un amusement agréable, elle ne se put résoudre à estre si prodigue du sien, qu'elle tenoit mieux employé aux occupations de l'esprit.[218]

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[217] *Ibid.*

[218] *Mémoires* of Valentin Conrart, as quoted in R. Kerviler-E. de Barthélemy, *Valentin Conrart. Sa vie et sa Correspondance* (Paris, 1881, Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1971), p. 172.

In a similar vein, Mlle de Scudéry emphasized in the *Grand Cyrus* that it was ridiculous for a woman to spend many years taking dance lessons, since in practice she "ne peut dancer avec bien-séance que cinq ou six ans de sa vie."[219] It is a waste of time, especially when it happened at the cost of the rudiments of reading and writing.[220]

The Goncourts' compendium, *La femme au dix-huitième siècle* (1862), gives the impression that music was not a principal activity in eighteenth-century Parisian salons either. The authors elaborate at great length on the domination of salon women in various spheres of eighteenth-century life, including their patronage of writers, poets and philosophers, but there is almost no music in this picture and one can hardly avoid the conclusion that music was not valued as highly as literature or philosophy, at least by the authors. The epistolary and literary output left by the famous eighteenth-century salon hostesses is largely equally disappointing where music in salons is concerned.[221] The salonnières do not dwell much in their memoirs and letters on musical events in Paris; they pay their social duty of more or less regular attendance at the Opéra and duly report it in their letters and memoirs, but hardly ever include more personal reflections and evaluation of music, or report music performances in their salons.

As in the previous century, "silent" salons did not reflect the reality outside them. The proliferation of private concerts that began at the end of the seventeenth century was continued with even greater enthusiasm. From the beginning of the Regency until about 1724, among the most spectacular were those organized once a month at the mansion of Antoine Crozat, the *trésorier de l'ordre du Saint-Esprit*, and "the richest man in Paris."

In *Séjour à Paris* (1727), meant as a guide for travellers to Paris who were interested in the arts, a German author advised future visitors to practice music, because, as he put it, "it gives entry into fashionable society and makes it possible to take part in various concerts organized every day, and to spend nicely many hours which otherwise would be unpleasant."[222]

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[219] Mlle de Scudéry, *Artamène, ou Le Grand Cyrus*, X, p. 398.

[220] The abundant correspondence of Madame de Sévigné (1607-1696), referring to the years 1646-1696, epitomizes the superficial musical connoisseurship of salon women.

[221] For example, *Correspondance complète de la Marquise du Deffand*, ed. L. Dussieux and E. Soulié, 2 vols. (Paris, 1865); *Memoirs and Correspondence of Madame d'Epinay* (London: George Routledge & Sons, 1939); *Lettres de Mademoiselle de Lespinasse*, ed. G. Isambert, 2 vols. (Paris: Alphonse Lemeure, 1876); *Mémoires de la Baronne d'Oberkirch*.

During the reign of Louis XV the Parisian bourgeoisie reached a level of prosperity that allowed them to adopt a lavish aristocratic style of life, including various forms of artistic patronage. Concerts given from about 1730 on in the house of Ferrand, a wealthy *fermier général*, were only a prelude to spectacular musical events organized by another chief tax collector, La Pouplinière, both in his Parisian mansion and in his country estate at Passy, for over thirty years (1731-1762).[223] After La Pouplinière's death, some of his musicians entered the service of prince Louis-François de Conti who, an amateur musician himself, maintained a private orchestra in Paris.[224] Private musical gatherings in Paris were more frequent from the second half of the eighteenth century on. Michel Brenet in his book *Les concerts en France sous l'Ancien Régime*, published in 1900 and still the authority in the field, reported that regular musical performances took place not only in the aristocratic houses of the comte d'Albaret, the prince d'Aiguillon, the marshal de Noailles and the baron de Bagge, and in the salons of prosperous financiers, but also with "bourgeois amateurs."[225]

The striking contrast between the occasional reports about music in the literary output of the eighteenth-century salonnières, and the proliferation of *musique particulière* in Parisian houses, which can be reconstructed from other sources, reflects the traditional hierarchy within the arts in France, in which music occupied a relatively inferior place, overshadowed by literature. The lack of the learned tradition of music, comparable with that of literature, was considered a source of its inferiority. "Who would not prefer the glory of Malherbe to that of Pergolesi?"—asked the prolific *littérateur* Michel de Cubières-Palmézeaux in *De la mélomanie et son influence sur la littérature* (1802). "The poems of Homer and Virgil are still with us. Have we a single Greek or Roman symphony?" These rhetorical questions were to support a thesis that it is not possible to excel in every art and that each country has its own dominating one.[226] In the case of France, it was undoubtedly literature. Almost until the end of the eighteenth century, in French aesthetic writings on music the "natural" frame of reference was still literature, and not music itself. Music was considered inferior to poetry and drama; and instrumental music inferior to vocal, as lacking the verbal precision to determine exactly the emotion being expressed and insufficiently precise to handle "moral" concepts.

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[222] Joachim Christoph Nemeitz, *Le Séjour de Paris, c'est-à-dire instructions fideles pour les voyageurs de condition . . . durant leur séjour à Paris* (Leyde: Jean van Abconde, 1727), p. 69.

[223] Georges Cucuel, *La Pouplinière et la musique de chambre au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Librairie Fischbacher, 1913); Jules et Edouard Goncourt *La femme au dix-huitieme siècle*, 2 vols. (Paris: Ernest Flammarion, Eugene Fasquelle [1877]), p. 88.

[224] Herbert C. Turrentine, "The Prince de Conti: A Royal Patron of Music," *Musical Quarterly* 54 (July, 1968), pp. 308-315.

[225] Brenet, *Les concerts en France sous l'ancien régime*, pp. 350-355.

The inconspicuous role of music among the activities of Parisian salons shows that the salon was a specific form of socializing with its activities pragmatically oriented towards ensuring for the salonnières a place in public life but through compliance with, rather than violation of, traditional societal, aesthetic and moral norms. By relegating music to a secondary activity and cultivating literary interests instead, seventeenth-century salonnières not only dealt with what was more prestigious socially, but also put themselves beyond the criticism of those who attacked the luxury and laxity of morals often associated with music. Opera seems to be the only musical genre salonnières were interested in. But attending operas was primarily a social rather than aesthetic experience for the Old Regime elite; since Louis XIV, the Parisian Opéra was an institution supported by and associated with the royal establishment. Despite attacks and the often ambiguous moral aura surrounding it, it was royal patronage and support that allowed (if not forced) *honnête* ladies to attend operas.[227]

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[226] As quoted by Lesure, *Music and Art in Society*, p. 25.

[227] The *Lettres patentes* establishing the *Académies d'opéra ou représentations en musique en langue française sur le pied de celles d'Italie*, issued by Louis XIV in 1669, granted ladies and members of the nobility the right to participate in the performances without detracting from their noble station. See Robert M. Isherwood, *Music in the Service of the King* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1973), pp. 175-176.

## Salon Discourse[228]

The inseparability of salons and honnêteté was established through conversation, which was considered a practical implementation of the rules of honnêteté and therefore a superior mode of communication in polite society. An emphasis on polite conversation as a central form of salon activity provided a continuity between seventeenth- and eighteenth-century salons. The precepts of a perfect conversation had not changed either: the basics set by such experts as the Chevalier de Méré in his *Discours de la conversation* written in 1677, and Mlle de Scudéry in numerous *Conversations* published in the 1680s, were appropriated a hundred years later by the Abbé Morellet in his essay "De la conversation" (1778).[229] As did his predecessors, Morellet emphasized primarily the formal aspects of a conversation. A perfect conversation was an incarnation of the principle of the juste milieu: it should be neither "rigorously methodical," because then it becomes heavy and pedantic; nor should it be "entirely rambling," because it makes it frivolous and ridiculous.[230] Similarly familiar was Morellet's preference for a general, rather than particular conversation, which did not require a specialized knowledge and therefore allowed for a participation of all gathered.[231] Finally, Morellet included in his essay a standard list of what should be avoided in a conversation: inattentiveness, interrupting, domination, dispute and the like; a typical repertoire of prohibitions from the early seventeenth century.

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[228] A version of this section has been accepted for publication. Jolanta T. Pekacz,"Gendered Discourse as a Political Option in Pre-Revolutionary France," in *Études Internationales sur le Dix-huitième Siècle/International Eighteenth-Century Studies*, edited by Alberto Postigliola and Jochen Schlobach. Paris: Éditions Champion.

[229] Although Morellet acknowledged his debt to Jonathan Swift's "Hints toward an Essay on Conversation," in fact, he was repeating what had been canonic in theories of honnêteté and a practice in Parisian salons for over a hundred years.

[230] "Il y a donc un milieu entre ces deux extrémités, et la conversation ne doit être ni rigorousement méthodique, ni absolument décousue. Dans le premier cas, elle devient pesante et pédantesque; dans la deuxième, elle est frivole et ridicule." [Morellet], "De la conversation," in *Eloges de Mme Geoffrin*, p. 198.

[231] "Participation" in a conversation did not necessarily mean for Morellet an active participation; listening was for him a participation too. "La conversation est générale lorsq'elle est entre toutes les personnes qui forment le cercle ou la société, et que chacun y contribue, soit comme acteur, soit comme auditeur." Morellet, "De la conversation," p. 216.

Just as the rules of politeness were best acquired by apprenticeship in polite society, not by the knowledge of theoretical precepts, so the ideals of a perfect salon discourse were handed down by apprenticeship, as suggested by the succession of famous salonnières, from Mme de Rambouillet in the 1610s to Mme Necker shortly before the French Revolution, almost each attending her predecessor's salon.[232] Mlle de Lespinasse was probably the most explicit in acknowledging her debt to Mme du Deffand whose salon made her a salonnière in her own right.

> . . . Madame du Deffand, le président Hénault, l'abbé Bon, l'archivêque de Toulouse, l'archivêque d'Aix, M. Turgot, M. d'Alembert, l'abbé de Boismont . . . voilà les hommes qui m'ont appris à parler, à penser, et qui ont daigné me compter pour quelque chose—

wrote Julie de Lespinasse about the habitués of the salon of the marquise du Deffand, characteristically emphasizing "talk" rather than "think."[233]

Those who taught Mlle de Lespinasse to talk and to think and who deigned to consider herto be worthwhile, were all men (with the exception of the hostess of the salon) because it was predominantly male company that constituted a salon conversation. Morellet argued in his essay that it is difficult to have a good conversation with more than a dozen persons and that it is even more difficult when there are several women in the company, for each of them inevitably becomes the centre of her own little group. "Je le dirai avec franchise [confessed Morellet], je n'ai jamais vu de conversation habituellement bonne, que là ou une maitresse de maison étoit, sinon la seule femme, du-moins une sorte de centre de la société."[234] (Morellet also gave another reason for the exclusion of women from a conversation: their typical lack of education and desire to learn. He admitted that he found very good conversations in circles including several women, because these women were educated or wished to learn, but such a frame of mind he considered uncommon among women.[235])

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[232] Mlle de Scudéry attended the salon de Rambouillet; Mlle de Lespinasse practiced in the salon of Mme du Deffand, who herself attended the salon of Mme de Lambert; Mme Geoffrin sat for years in the salon of Mme de Tencin.

[233] *Lettres de Mademoiselle de Lespinasse*, ed. by Gustave Isambert, 2 vols. (Paris: Alphonse Lemeure, 1876), I, p. 140.

[234] Morellet, "De la conversation," p. 225.

As with his other rules regarding a good conversation, Morellet's exclusion of women was not his original idea but reflected what had long been an object of theoretical considerations of the writers on honnêteté and a common practice among Parisian salonnières, with the notable exception of the seventeenth-century précieuses. Mlle de Scudéry, for example, believed that the conversation of an exclusively feminine company is always less attractive than a conversation in which men are a majority: ". . . je ne sçay comment exprimer, qui fait qu'un honneste Homme réjouït & divertit plus un compagnie de Dames, que la plus aimable Femme de la terre ne le sçauroit faire."[236] Mme de Lambert at the beginning of the eighteenth century was the first salonnière who introduced two days of reception for two separate groups of guests and limited the number of women received at "serious" Tuesday meetings. Other salonnières followed suit. Few women are mentioned in connection with Mme de Tencin's salon. Mme Geoffrin, who typically did not receive women (with the exception of Mlle de Lespinasse),[237] is believed to have said precisely what Morellet would have said, that "plusieurs femmes dans un diner distraient les convives, dispersent et éparpillent la conversation."[238]

Having limited the number of women in her salon to the point of exclusion, a salonnière herself was supposed to follow a set of rules regarding a conversation. It was not a desire to distinguish herself in a company (characteristic of the précieuses) or even to participate in a conversation on equal footing with her male guests that made a perfect salonnière, but her ability to make them participate by placing herself in the background. Morellet made it explicit that the role of a salon hostess was to facilitate the exchange among the participants and allow them to shine in their turn. Allowing others to "shine" rather than shining themselves was precisely what earned the salonnières the eulogies of their guests. As noted earlier in this Chapter, Mme de Tencin was praised by her protegé, Pierre Marivaux, because she was a "causeuse admirable, elle s'appliquait moins à montrer son esprit qu'à faire valoir celui des autres."[239] Mme du Deffand extolled Mme de Mirepoix very much for the same reasons: "Sa conversation est aisée et naturelle, elle ne cherche point à briller, elle laisse prendre aux autres tout l'avantage qu'ils veulent sans empressement, sans dédain, sans véhémence, sans froideur . . ."[240] Morellet found it praiseworthy that Mme Geoffrin allowed her guests to speak without making substantive contributions to the conversation.[241] La Harpe emphasized the qualities of Julie de Lespinasse that made her an extraordinary salon hostess:

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[235] ". . . j'ai trouvé encore de fort bonnes conversations dans des cercles ou se trouvoient plusieurs femmes; mais c'est lorsque ces femmes étoient elles-mêmes instruites, ou cherchant et aimant l'instruction, disposition, il faut l'avouer, peu commune." Morellet, "De la conversation," p. 225.

[236] Mlle de Scudéry, *Conversations sur divers sujets* (1680), 2 vols., 5th ed. (Amsterdam: Daniel du Fresne, 1686), I, p. 10.

[237] Morellet writes that in addition to her official days of reception, "Elle [Mme Geoffrin] donnait aussi quelques soupers peu nombreux dans la semaine à des femmes agréables, et elle recevait dans la soirée beaucoup de gens du monde et de la meilleure compagnie . . ." *Mémoires*, I, p. 85.

[238] See Mallortie, "Discours d'ouverture," p. 21.

> Je puis dire que je n'ai point connu de femme qui eût plus d'esprit naturel, moins d'envie d'en montrer, et plus de talent pour faire valoir celui des autres. Personne non plus ne savait mieux faire les honneurs de sa maison; elle mettait tout son monde à sa place, et chacun était content de la sienne. Elle avait un grand usage du monde, et l'espèce de politesse la plus aimable, celle qui a le ton de l'intérêt.[242]

D'Alembert praised above all Julie de Lespinasse's art of saying to others exactly what they were pleased to hear, of speaking little of herself and much of her interlocutors,[243] and Guibert emphasized her deference to social position: "she was never above or beneath those to whom she was speaking."[244] Marmontel, on his part, pointed at Mlle de Lespinasse's extraordinary intuition and careful manoeuvering that made a conversation in her salon a success:

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[239] Marivaux, *La vie de Marianne*, Fifth part.

[240] *Horace Walpole's Correspondence of Mme du Deffand and Wiart*, VII (VI), Appendix 5c, p. 79.

[241] Morellet, "Portrait de Madame Geoffrin," *Eloges de Madame Geoffrin*, p. 11.

[242] La Harpe, *Correspondance littéraire*, I, pp. 326-327.

[243] "Portrait de Mlle de Lespinasse," in *Lettres de Mlle de Lespinasse*, ed. Eugène Asse (Paris, n.d.), p. 346. Some authors interpreted Mlle de Lespinasse's need to please in psychological terms. Benedatta Craveri, for example, writes about her "pathological need for attention" and suggests that the desire to please became for her a condition of existence. Benedetta Craveri, *Madame du Deffand and Her World*, translated from the Italian and the French by Teresa Waugh (Boston: David R. Godine, 1994), p. 160. Craveri brings evidence from other authors too. "The indifference of anyone who approached her caused her, almost without her realizing it, an indefinable malaise, a kind of physical suffering; she could not rest until she felt the ice melt in her radiant charm."

> . . . ce cercle était formé de gens qui n'étoient point liés ensamble. Elle les avait pris çà et là dans le monde, mais si bien assortis, que, lorsqu'ils étoient là, ils s'y trouvoient en harmonie comme les cordes d'un instrument monté par une habile main. En suivant la comparaison, je pourrois dire qu'elle jouoit de cet instrument avec un art qui tenoit du génie; elle sembloit savoir quel son rendroit la corde qu'elle alloit toucher; je veux dire que nos esprits et nos caractères lui étoient si bien connus que, pour les mettre en jeu, elle n'avoit qu'un mot à dire. Nulle part la conversation n'étoit plus vive, plus brillante ni mieux réglée que chez elle.[245]

Such a place of the salonnière in a salon discourse reflected what seems to have been a general consensus as to the division of roles between sexes, shared by men and women alike. It was expressed by Fontenelle in his apology of the *commerce des femmes* (written presumably by Mme de Lambert) upon the reception of Mirabaud, the preceptor of the princesses d'Orléans, to the Académie on 28 September, 1726:

> Pour les recherches laborieuses, pour la solitude du raisonnement, pour la force, pour la profondeur, il ne faut que des hommes; pour une élégance naive, pour une simplicité fine et piquante, pour le sentiment délicat des convenances, pour une certaine fleur d'esprit, il faut des hommes polis par le commerce des femmes. Il y en a plus en France que partout ailleurs, graces à la forme de notre société, et de la nous viennent des avantages, dont les autres Nations tâcheront inutilement ou de rabaisser, ou de se dissimuler le prix.[246]

The division of gender roles as formulated by Fontenelle, too, was nothing more than a polite restatement of the traditional views keeping women away from the commerce of men, apparently on the basis of "natural" differences between the sexes. What was involved, however, was not simply an acknowledgement that women are

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P.-M. Ségur, "Julie de Lespinasse. Le couvent de Saint-Joseph," *Revue des Deux Mondes*, 15 April, 1905, p. 873.

[244] J.-A.-H. Guibert, *Eloge d'Elisa*, p. 407, as quoted by Craveri, *Mme Du Deffand*, p. 160.

[245] Marmontel, *Mémoires*, I, p. 220.

different from men, but an assumption that the way they are different makes them unable to participate in intellectual activities on an equal footing with men, or that such participation is undesirable. This meant, in particular, the denial of formal knowledge to women (the male domain) and their exclusion from the right to judge (except for some limited areas in which a judgement was based on "intuition" rather than kowledge). Thus, women's lack of formal education (allegedly compensated by their intuition), a traditional object of men's praise, could (and did) easily become an argument used by them for the exclusion of women from active participation in serious discourse. This is precisely the kind of rebuke Mme du Deffand received from La Harpe for daring to criticize Montesquieu's *De L'esprit de Lois*.

> Madame Dudeffant [*sic*] qui n'y voyait que des saillies dit que c'était de 'l'esprit sur les lois,' et Voltaire adopta le mot et le jugement. J'ai assez connu Madame Dudeffant pour assurer que cette femme, qui avait de l'esprit naturel, et surtout de l'esprit de société sans aucune instruction, n'était pas plus en état d'apprécier *l'Esprit des Lois* que capable de le lire: Elle ne pouvait que le parcourir pour en parler.[247]

The idea that women were supposed to be ignorant and judge intuitively was a trap: not only because intuition was a rather elusive concept to build an authority upon, but also because from there it was was only one step to claim that women were legitimate judges of some works (simple, trivial) but not of others (complex). In trying to judge "serious" works by using intuition women rendered them trivial and hence they became responsible for the corruption of taste and the effeminization of the whole nation.[248]

This same rhetoric based on the division of gender roles can be found in numerous eulogies of eighteenth-century salonnières, written by their male guests. These are nothing more than a polite relegation of salonnières to the sphere of governance. D'Alembert, for example, in the *Euloge de Saint Aulaire*, extolled the salon of marquise

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[246] As quoted by Marchal, *Madame de Lambert*, p. 520.

[247] Jean-François de La Harpe, *Lycée, ou Cours de littérature ancienne et moderne* (Paris, l'an XIII [1804]), vol. XV, p. 54.

[248] See Pierre-Daniel Huet, *Huetiana* (Paris: Jacques Estienne, 1772), p. 174; Timmermans, *L'accès des femmes à la culture*, pp. 170-176.

de Lambert as mutually beneficial for the intellectuals and polite society, precisely because the marquise did not exceed her role as a salonnière:

> Cette femme, célèbre par son esprit, réunissait chez elle la société la plus choisie des gens de lettres et des gens du monde. Les uns y portaient le savoir et les lumières, les autres cette politesse et cette urbanité que le mérite même a besoin d'acquérir, si'il veut obtenir l'affection en forçant à l'estime. Les gens du monde sortaient de chez elle plus éclairés, les gens de lettres plus aimables.[249]

In reality, d'Alembert's opinion was nothing more than a conventional platitude: it was written long after Mme de Lambert's death in 1733 and d'Alembert, born in 1717, could not have experienced what he was describing.[250]

As at the beginning of the seventeenth century there existed an incongruity between the view that women were weak and incapable of playing public roles on the one hand, and the eulogies of women and their beneficial role in spreading good manners on the other, a similar incongruity existed throughout the eighteenth century: eulogies on the one hand and criticism and contempt on the other, expressed very often by the same person. And eighteenth-century authors found the same resolution of the problem as their seventeenth-century predecessors: women were praised as long as they did not interfere with men's affairs, that is, as long as they respected established gendered roles. One might even suggest that the more men wanted to exclude women from active participation in things public (or rather cover up already existing exclusion) the more eulogies of their decorative roles they issued.

The division of gender roles was accepted by the salonnières too. Mme Necker believed that the *métier* of a salonnière was to attend to her guests: "As long as one is in society, one must occupy oneself with others, never keeping silent out of laziness or from distraction, but only in order to listen or to let others speak."[251] Mme de Genlis will write in the same vein in her *Dictionnaire des étiquettes* (1818):

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[249] D'Alembert, "Eloge de Saint-Aulaire," *Oeuvres complètes de d'Alembert*, 5 vols. (Paris: A. Belin, 1821–1822),III, p. 295.

[250] For example, Duclos wrote in a similar vein in his *Considérations sur les moeurs de ce siècle* (Paris: Prault fils, 1750) about mutual benefits from an integration of writers and wealthy patrons; Voltaire, too, believed in such benefits.

> Pour bien faire les honneurs d'une maison, il faut avoir du tact, de la finesse, beaucoup d'usage du monde, une grande égalité d'humeur, du calme et de l'obligeance dans la caractère. Il faut, quand on reçoit du monde, s'oublier soi-même, n'avoir nulle envie de briller, et mettre la bienveillance à la place du désir de plaire; il faut s'occuper des autres, sans agitation, sans affectation, et savoir les faire valoir, sans avoir l'air de les protéger; il faut enfin encourager les gens tmides, les mettre à l'aise, entretenir la conversation, en la dirigeant avec adresse plutôt qu'en la soutenant soi-même, et que chacun reçoive l'accueil qui peut et qui doit le satisfaire.[252]

This very relegation of women to the formal roles of guardians of politeness and propriety implied in practice that the salonnières allowed their guests to "shine" only within strictly designated limits both as to the form and as to the content of conversations. In *La vie de Marianne* Pierre Marivaux described a conversation in the salon of Mme de Tencin as always "proper:" "Ils ne disent rien que de juste et que de convenable, rien qui ne fut d'un commerce doux, facile et gai."[253] In effect, Marivaux merely stated what had been a leitmotif of descriptions of salon conversations beginning with the marquise de Rambouillet.

To assure the desired harmony of opinions, salon guests were carefully selected. Diderot, "an extremely sociable man," as his biographer writes, who loved to talk and for whom "communication was almost compulsion,"[254] was excluded from the salons of Mme du Deffand and Mme Geoffrin. If Morellet is to be believed, it was not because of Diderot's lack of conversational skills. Morellet met Diderot while studying at the Sorbonne and later wrote in his *Mémoires*:

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[251] Suzanne Curchod Necker, *Nouveaux mélanges extraits des manuscrits de Mme. Necker*, 2 vols. (Paris: C. Pougens [et] Genets, 1801), I, pp. 188-189.

[252] Mme de Genlis, *Dictionnaire critique et raisonné des etiquettes de la cour, des usages du monde, des amusemens, des modes, des moeurs, etc. . . . ou, L'esprit des etiquettes et des usages anciens, compares aux modernes*, 2 vols. (Paris: P. Mongie aine, 1818), I, c.v. "Maitresse de Maison."

[253] Pierre Marivaux, *La vie de Marianne*, as quoted by Paul Garzagne, *Marivaux par lui-même* (Paris: Editions du Seuil, 1954), pp. 70-71.

[254] Wilson, *Diderot*, p. 173.

> La conversation de Diderot, homme extraordinaire, dont le talent ne peut pas plus être contesté que ses torts, avait une grande puissance et un grand charme; sa discussion était animée, d'une parfaite bonne foi, subtile sans obscurité, variée dans ses formes, brillante d'imagination, féconde en idées et réveillant celles des autres.[255]

Benedetta Craveri suggests that the exclusion of Diderot from Mme du Deffand's salon was caused not so much by his alleged lack of manners (d'Alembert, who did not have perfect manners, was tolerated by Mme du Deffand) but by the radicalism of his views: "D'Alembert's rigid theorising combined with a contempt for compromise rendered him harmless whereas Diderot's passionate contradictory views constituted a threat to Madame du Deffand's unyielding conservatism."[256]

The reasons Mme Geoffrin decided to exclude Diderot from her salon also seem to go beyond his alleged lack of manners. As put by an eighteenth-century author, Mme Geoffrin feared Diderot's impetuosity, the rashness of his opinions, supported, when he was aroused, by a fiery and stirring eloquence.[257] The duchesse d'Abrantès wrote in a similar vein that Mme Geoffrin did not invite Diderot to her dinners.[258] In a letter to the Polish King, Stanislaw August Poniatowski, Mme Geoffrin described Diderot as "upright," but "wrongheaded." "C'est un bon et honnête homme, mais il a la tête si mauvaise, et il est si mal organisé, qu'il ne voit ni n'entend rien de ce qu'il voit, ni de ce qu'il entend, tel que cela est; il est toujours comme un homme qui rêve, et qui croit réel tout ce qu'il a rêvé."[259] In contrast, she recommended Grimm to the King: " . . .il est sage, il voit bien, et il a beaucoup d'esprit. Il me sera doux de causer avec lui, s'il a l'honneur de voir Votre Majesté."[260] As a result, Diderot could practice his conversational skills only with the baron d'Holbach. This is where Morellet used to meet him and reported: "I heard . . . Diderot treat questions of philosophy, art, or literature, and by his wealth of expression, fluency, and inspired appearance, hold our attention for a long stretch of time.[261]

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[255] Morellet, *Mémoires*, I, p. 29.

[256] Craveri, *Madame du Deffand and Her World*, p. 130.

[257] François-Louis, comte d'Escherny, *Mélanges de littérature, d'histoire, de morale et de philosophie*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1811), III, p. 128. Paradoxically, as noted by Arthur M. Wilson, the three anonymous pamphlets written by Diderot during the *Querelle des Bouffons* were characterized by the spirit of moderation and conciliation. Wilson, *Diderot*, p. 179.

[258] D'Abrantès, *Une soirée chez Mme Geoffrin*, pp. 148-149.

[259] *Correspondance inédite de roi Stanislas-Auguste Poniatowski et de Madame Geoffrin (1764-1777)*, ed. by Charles de Mouy (Paris, 1875; Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1970), p. 466. In response to non-existing letter of the King, Mme Geoffrin wrote on 27 June, 1774: "Je suis persuadée que Diderot n'aurait pas eu tant d'analogie avec votre caractère et votre esprit que Grimm. Je crois que celui-ci sera content de Votre Majesté. . . . Le procédé de Diderot avec Votre Majesté est impertinent; mais il n'a aucun usage du

More specifically, limitations imposed upon the subjects of salon conversations were similar to those formulated by the seventeenth-century writers on honnêteté and referred primarily to religion and politics, which were to be treated with "great circumspection," and to other "irritable topics" because they could cause disruptions among salon guests. In practice, "great circumspection" could extend to exclusion. Madame de Genlis wrote retrospectively (1824-1825) in her "Portrait of Mme du Deffand" that

> On ne parla chez Madame du Deffand, ni de philosophie, ni même de littérature: la compagnie était composée de gens de différents états; les beaux esprits s'y trouvaient en petit nombre, et ceux qui vont dans le monde y sont communément aimables, quand ils n'y dominent pas.[262]

According to Morellet, the salon of Mme Necker was not free from restrictions regarding some topics either:

> La conversation y était bonne, quoique un peu contrainte par la sévérité de Mme Necker, auprès de laquelle beaucoup de sujets ne pouvaient être touchés, et qui souffrait surtout de la liberté des opinions religieuses. Mais, en matière de littérature, on causait agréablement, et elle en parlait elle-même fort bien.[263]

Thomas emphasized the circumspection with which Mme Geoffrin treated subjects of conversations in her salon: "Tout ce qui était ardent autour d'elle l'exaspérait; elle craignait l'impétuosité des idées comme des sentiments et croyait que la raison même

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monde, et encore moins de ce que l'on doit à un Roi." (p. 470)

[260] *Ibid.*

[261] As quoted by Wilson, *Diderot*, p. 175.

[262] ["Portrait of Madame du Deffand, by Madame de Genlis], *Horace Walpole's Correspondence with Madame du Deffand and Wiart*, VIII (VI), pp. 62-63.

[263] Morellet, *Mémoires*, I, p. 154.

avait tort quand elle était passionnée."[264] In 1770, Frederick Melchior Grimm reported that Mme Geoffrin reimposed restrictions of topics of conversations in her salon:

> Mère Geoffrin fait savoir qu'elle renouvelle les défenses et lois prohibitives des années précédantes, et qu'il ne sera pas plus permis que par le passé de parler chez elle ni d'affaires intérieures, ni d'affaires extérieures; ni d'affairs le la cour, ni d'affairs de la ville; ni d'affairs du nord, ni d'affairs du midi; ni d'affairs d'Orient, et d'Occident; ni de politique, ni de finances; ni de paix, ni de guerre; ni de religion, ni de gouvernement; ni de théologie, ni de métaphysique; ni de grammaire, ni de musique; ni d'aucune matière quelconque . . .[265]

As suggested by some authors, Mme Geoffrin was a *roturière* and Grimm's comment was an allusion to her allegedly excessive attachment to "propriety" reflecting an oversensitiveness typical for an aspiring eighteenth-century bourgeoise. In comparison with other salonnières, however, Mme Geoffrin does not appear more particular about the propriety of the conversation than her predecessors of a more impressive social origin, nor than her successors.[266]

Whereas in the seventeenth century the rules of polite conversation were not felt as a constraint but rather as a privilege and their advantages widely accepted, as Christoph Strosetzki argues,[267] they soon began to be perceived as a mixed blessing.

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[264] Antoine-Léonard Thomas, "A la mémoire de Mme Geoffrin," in *Eloges de Madame Geoffrin*, p. 83.

[265] Grimm, *Correspondance litteraire*, VIII, p. 438.

[266] In a way very much like Grimm's, Stendhal will write almost half-a-century later that in the salons of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, "one could talk freely about anything whatever, provided one didn't joke about God, or the priests, or the king, or the men in power, or the artists protected by the court, or about any part of the establishment, provided one said nothing good about Béranger, or the opposition newspapers, or Voltaire, or Rousseau, or of anything which involves the use of free speech: provided, above all, that one never talked politics . . . In spite of good breeding, perfect politeness, and a desire to please, boredom was written large on every countenance. The young people who attended out of duty were afraid to talk of anything which might arouse suspicion that they had been thinking, or reveal that they had read some prohibited book, so they fell silent after a few well-chosen words on Rossini and the weather." Stendhal, *Red and Black*, translated and edited by Robert M. Adams (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1969), Book II, Chapter 4, p. 202.

[267] Christoph Strosetzki, *Rhétorique de la conversation: Sadimension littéraire et linguistique dans la société française du XVIIe siècle*, transl. from the French by Sabine

Roger Marchal suggests that it was precisely the formality of tone in Mme de Lambert's salon and the restrictions she imposed upon conversation in her salon that made its habitués, La Motte and Terrason, seek a more relaxed atmosphere in the Parisian cafés, *Gradot* and *Procope*, where Houdar de La Motte played a role comparable to that of Fontenelle in salons.[268]

In their memoirs written shortly after the French Revolution, Marmontel and Morellet added their own share to the criticism of restrictions imposed upon conversations in the salons run by women.[269] Marmontel reported the lack of spontaneity and the theatricality of the conversation in the salon of Mme de Tencin:

> . . . on y arrivoit préparé à jouer son rôle, et que l'envie d'entrer en scène n'y lassoit pas toujours à la conversation la liberté de suivre son cours facile et naturel. C'était à qui saisiroit le plus vite, et comme à la volée, le moment de placer son mot, son conte, son anecdote, sa maxime où son trait léger et piquant, et pour amener l'à-propos, on le tiroit quelquefois d'un peu loin. Dans Marivaux, l'impatiance de faire preuve de finesse et de sagacité perçoit visiblement. Montesquieu, avec plus de calme, attendoit que la balle vint à lui, mais il attendoit. Mairan guettoit l'occasion. Asturc ne daignoit pas l'attendre. Fontenelle seul la laissoit venir sans la chercher, que ses mots fins, ses jolis contes n'occupoient jamais qu'un moment. Helvétius, attentif et discret, recueilloit pour semer un jour.[270]

Other salons, too, were blamed for the restrictions they imposed. ". . . il manquoit à la société de Mme Geoffrin"—wrote Marmontel—"l'un des agrémens dont je faisois le plus de cas, la liberté de la pensée. Avec son doux *voilà qui est bien*, elle ne laissoit pas de tenir nos esprits comme à la lisière; et j'avois ailleurs des diners où l'on étoit plus à son

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Seubert. Papers on French Seventeenth-Century Literature, no. 20 (Paris-Seattle-Tuebingen: Biblio 17, 1984), p. 185.

[268] Marchal, *Madame de Lambert*, p. 241, n. 110.

[269] Dena Goodman argues that critical comments on Mme Geoffrin's salon in both Marmontel's and Morellet's memoires written after the French Revolution resulted from the change of perspective caused by the French Revolution: "In the masculine world that emerged from the French Revolution, these men who had submitted themselves to the rule of women in that earlier age were perhaps wondering if such submission had been necessary." (Goodman, *The Republic of Letters*, p. 107). Goodman's contention implies that the criticism of pre-revolutionary salons was a post-revolutionary phenomenon, which is not true, as the negative comments (such as Grimm's) published by salon habitués before the Revolution clearly indicate.

aise."[271] Morellet, on his part, made it explicit that the atmosphere in Mme Geoffrin's salon was rather suffocating and made the philosophes seek unrestricted ways of socializing outside salons:

> Après nos diners chez elle [Mme Geoffrin] nous nous rendions souvent aux Tuileries, d'Alembert, Helvétius, Galiani, Marmontel, Thomas, etc., pour y trouver d'autres amis, apprendre d'autres nouvelles, fronder le gouvernement et philosopher tout à notre aise. Nous faisions cercle, assis au pied d'un arbre de la grande allée, et nous abandonnant à une conversation animée et libre comme l'air que nous respirions.[272]

The hostess herself, wrote Morellet, was

> . . . un peu méticuleuse et timide, obséquieuse envers le gouvernement, ménageant les gens en place et les gens de la cour: sentiments bien excusables et bien naturels dans une femme âgée, qui soignait avec raison sa vie, et ne voulait pas en compromettre la douceur et la tranquilité . . .[273]

As opposed to the salons run by the ladies, contemporary authors, men and women alike, emphasize the unrestricted character of conversations as a distinctive feature of male (or predominantly male) gatherings, such as those organized by the baron D'Holbach and Helvétius.[274] Helvétius gave a dinner on Tuesdays, while Thursdays and Sundays were the days when baron d'Holbach entertained. According to Marmontel, the society that gathered in these two salons consisted partly of the guests of Mme Geoffrin and partly of those whom Madame Geoffrin found too impudent and too iconoclastic to

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[270] Marmontel, *Mémoires*, I, pp. 101-102.

[271] *Ibid.*, I, p. 170. In a similar vein, Paciaudi nicknamed Mme Geoffrin "czarine de Paris." Marius Roustan, *Les philosophes et la société française au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris, 1911, Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1970), p. 221; and the salon of Mme Geoffrin was nicknamed "The Kingdom of Rue Saint-Honoré." Wilson, *Diderot*, p. 222; "kingdom" and not "republic" one might add.

[272] Morellet, *Mémoires*, I, pp. 95-96.

[273] *Ibid.*, I, p. 87.

[274] There were other salons in Paris run by men which, too, were described as places of unrestricted discourse. Feuillet de Conches, for example, wrote that: "M. Foncemagne, de l'Académie des Inscriptions, avait aussi une réunion qu'on appelait *la Conversation*. C'était une assemblée de gens d'esprit, qui s'établissait régulièrement chez lui tous les soirs. Il n'y avait ni jeux ni femmes, et l'on y dissertait philosophiquement comme jadis à Athènes, au lycée du Portique." *Les salons de conversation*, after *Mémoires secrets* de Bachaumont.

be admited at her dinners. "Elle estimoit le baron d'Holbach, elle aimoit Diderot, mais à la sourdine, et sans se commettre pour eux. Il est vrai qu'elle avoit admis et comme adopté Helvétius, mais jeune encore, avant qu'il eût fait des folies."[275] As opposed to the salon of Mme Geoffrin, where men of letters were subject to her discipline, Marmontel argued that with d'Holbach and Helvétius the men of letters were more at ease.[276]

David Hume confirmed this opinion when he wrote from Paris that the men of letters he met at d'Holbach's were "really very agreeable; all of them Men of the World, living in entire or almost entire Harmony among themselves, and quite irreproachable in their manners."[277] Abbé Morellet, too, reported the relaxed and friendly atmosphere at d'Holbach's dinners:

> Une grosse chère, mais bonne, d'excellent vin, d'excellent café, beaucoup de disputes, jamais de querelles; la simplicité des manières, qui sied à des hommes raisonnables et instruits, mais qui ne dégénérait point en grossièreté; une gaité vraie, sans être folle . . .[278]

The emphasis on harmony and the lack of quarrels in the salons of d'Holbach and Helvétius undermines Dena Goodman's thesis that only salonnières' governance ensured peaceful and polite conversation.[279] This thesis is also undermined by descriptions of conversations in early seventeenth-century men's circles. For example, conversations in the Conrart Group (1629-1634) were descibed by a contemporary author in the following way:

> Dans cette école d'honneur, de politesse et de sçavoir, l'on ne s'en faisoit point accroire, l'on ne s'entestoit point de son propre mérite, l'on n'y opinoit point tumultuairement et en désordre. Personne n'y disputoit avec altercation et avec aigreur; les défauts estoient repris avec douceur et modestie, les avis receus avec docilité et soumission; bien loin d'avoir de

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[275] Marmontel, *Mémoires*, I, p. 224.

[276] *Ibid.*, I, p. 227.

[277] David Hume to the Rev. Hugh Blair, [Paris?], December, 1763, *Letters of David Hume*, ed. by J. Y. T. Greig, 2 vols. (Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1969), I, p. 419.

[278] Morellet, *Mémoires*, I, pp. 133; see also Marmontel, *Mémoires*, I, p. 312.

[279] While she emphasises that the form imposed by salon women (politeness) was necessary for the philosophes to carry on their project of Enlightenment, she passes over with silence the fact that the exclusion of certain topics was not necessary as beneficial and made the philosophes look for alternative forms of gatherings. Goodman, *The Republic of Letters*, pp. 96-110.

> la jalousie les uns des autres, l'on se faisoit un honneur et un mérite de celuy de ses confrères dont on se glorifioit plus que du sien propre . . . Là, chacun s'efforçait de devenir de jour en jour plus sçavant et plus vertueux; l'on aspiroit sans cesse au sommet de la perfection et de la sagesse, sans s'imaginer faussement que l'on y estoit desjà parvenu, sans se flatter d'une douce et agréable resverie causée par illusions de l'amour propre qu'on laissoit les autres bien derrière, hors d'estat d'y pouvoir jamais atteindre.[280]

Conversations in the Cabinet Du Puy (1617-1661) were reported in a similar way:

> On y tient les conversations extrêment agréables sur les lettres et sur tout ce qui touche aux lettres; on y juge avec le plus grand soin les livres anciens et surtout les oeuvres modernes; on y parle de ce qui s'imprime de nouveau; on y discute les opinions des érudits . . . et sur toutes ces questions on émet des avis si sincères et si sages qu'on a raison d'apprécier cette assemblée qui vous instruit plus que les lectures continuelles; car . . . les esprits des hommes se polissent dans les réunions et y recueillent une certaine expérience.[281]

Thus, the presence of women, although often beneficial, was not *indispensable* for polite discourse, neither in the seventeenth nor in the eighteenth century.

The form of conversations with the baron d'Holbach was in many ways similar to the conversations in the salons run by ladies. "Souvent un seul y prenait la parole, et proposait sa théorie paisiblement et sans être interrompu"—reported Morellet. "D'autres fois, c'était un combat singulier en forme, dont tout le reste de la société était tranquille spectateur: manière d'écouter que je n'ai trouvée ailleurs que bien rarement."[282] But Morellet also emphasized that it was not the salon of Mme Geoffrin or Mlle de Lespinasse but the salon of D'Holbach which was a place to hear

> . . . la conversation la plus libre, la plus animée et la plus instructive qui fût jamais: quand je dis libre, j'entends en matière de philosophie, de religion, de gouvernement, car les plaisanteries libres dans un autre genre en étaient bannies. . . . [qu']il n'y a point de hardiesse politique et

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[280] La Chambre, *Réplique au Discours de Reception de Boileau-Despréaux* (1685) as quoted by Joséphine de Boer, "Men's literary circles in Paris, 1600-1660," p. 749, n. 89.

[281] *Lettre de Rolandus Paludanus aux frères Du Puy* quoted in Isaac Uri, *Un Cercle Savant au XVIIe siècle (1575-1655)* (Paris: Hachette, 1886), pp. 13-15; Boer, "Men's literary circles." p. 734, n. 16.

[282] Morellet, *Mémoires*, I, p. 134.

> religieuse qui ne fût là mise en avant et discutée *pro et contrà*, presque toujours avec beaucoup de subtilité et de profondeur.[283]

Diderot pointed in the same direction when he wrote that only d'Holbach's salon provided an uncensored, and intellectually "safe conversation."[284] According to Marmontel, however, liberty never turned into licentiousness and "il est des objets révérés et inviolables qui jamais n'y étoient soumis au débat des opinions. Dieu, la vertu, les saintes lois de la morale naturelle n'y furent jamais mis en doute, du moins en ma présence; c'est ce que je puis attester."[285]

The success of the dinners of d'Holbach, Morellet informs us, was partly due to Mme d'Holbach's inconspicuous role: she usually sat in the corner without saying anything or, at best, allowed herself to talk in a low voice with some of her intimates.[286] In contrast, the dinners with Helvétius, although gathering almost the same company that d'Holbach's, were quite different from these of the baron's. Helvétius's wife was chiefly to be blamed, according to Morellet: not only did she interfere with the choice of guests by not inviting those she did not like, but also brought disorder into philosophical discussions in which she could not help engaging herself.[287]

In addition to the lack of restrictions in male gatherings, such as that of d'Holbach, there was also another reason which made conversations taking place there unacceptable from the salonnières' point of view: their particular, rather than general character and the focus on specific problems, which excluded the lay audience (like salonnières themselves) from participation. This seems to be precisely what bothered Mme du Deffand in the salon of d'Holbach, as she put it in a letter written in 1765 to Georges Selwin, an old schoolfellow of Horace Walpole:

> Je vais quelquefois chez le baron d'Holbach; mais j'ai planté là ses diners; c'était à n'y pas tenir avec ses auteurs, ses philosophes et ses savants dont il a toujours un plein pigeonnier. Ils m'avaient fait tourner la tête avec un

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[283] *Ibid.*, I, pp. 133-134.

[284] *Oeuvres complètes de Diderot*, 20 vols. (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1875-1876), X, p. 379.

[285] Marmontel, *Mémoires*, I, p. 226.

[286] *Ibid.*, p. 141.

[287] *Ibid.*, p. 141.

> nouveau système de déluges antédiluviens qu'ils ont inventé pour prouver l'éternité de la matière.[288]

Salon conversation, in contrast, was by definition general. For seventeenth-century theoreticians of honnêteté, a specific conversation was typical for pedants and savants, not for polite society. Morellet, in his essay on conversation, also emphasized the superiority of a general and a lay-oriented conversation over a particular one, oriented toward solving a specific problem.[289] This very characteristic of salon conversation made it increasingly difficult for a salon to accommodate the type of discourse dealing with pressing problems of the day and requiring specific discourse within the framework of salon sociability.

In reality, while salons kept attracting literary men as places leading to the Académie, *grand monde* and pensions,[290] alternative modes of sociability (such as cafés and salons run by men) attracted them as places offering discourse unrestricted by the rules of politeness and by the necessarily general character of topics required in the salons run by women. As avenues leading to reputation and income were increasingly independent from salons, the contacts with salons did not prevent their habitués from pursuing their careers by implementing modes of discourse which violated the rules of politeness promoted in salons, as well as dealt with topics "forbidden" in salons. The predominant mode of discourse, too, changed over time and affected the role of salons. As Michel Foucault noticed, in the seventeenth century it was the spoken word which was seen as reflecting thoughts more directly.[291] Where in the seventeenth century superiority of the spoken word over the written gave the salonnières an advantageous position, in the next century the writen word began to gain primacy and the relationship between the salonnières and their guests changed. (As I will demonstrate in Chapter III, in the eighteenth-century quarrels over the French and the Italian opera, the dominant genre of discourse was a pamphlet, a *libelle*, not a salon conversation.) Feminine salons and gatherings run by men may be seen, then, as two distinct spheres of sociability using distinct modes of communication and serving different purposes: while salons run by women were places where ideas could be presented to the lay public and general conversation was the mode of communication, gatherings run by men were places where these ideas were being developed before they could be presented in public and specific, professional conversation was the mode of communication. (In seventeenth-century parlance, the first mode would have been classified as "honnête," the other as "pedantic.")

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[288] A letter of 2 December 1765 to Georges Selwin, as quoted by Feuillet de Conches, *Les salons de conversation*, p. 71.

[289] "De la conversation," pp. 170 and 215-220.

[290] See, for example, *Mémoires du Président Hénault*, p. 121.

[291] Michel Foucault, *Les mots et les choses* (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), pp. 92-95.

From this perspective, these two modes of sociability can be seen as complementary, rather than antagonistic, or superior *versus* inferior, as some present-day authors argue.[292] Although there were arguments justifying the emergence of a male-run sphere of sociability as a reaction against salons run by women (their lack of freedom, overemphasis on manners, etc.), and the emergence of male sphere of sociability was a further step towards the exclusion of women from the commerce of men and from Enlightenment discourse, in practice men (very often the same) attended both and salons run by women coexisted with gatherings run by men. The reasons salons survived the emergence of male-run places of socializing were the same that gave the salon its *raison d'être* in the first place: they provided contacts with the monde (which could lead to commissions or even pensions), with the Académie (which could lead to membership), they were places in which good manners were cultivated (which still were an important social asset), and they kept women away from the commerce of men.[293]

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[292] For example, by Dena Goodman, *The Republic of Letters*. Goodman's argument rests on the assumption of the superiority of salon conversation as a mode of communication and its restrictions (Goodman discusses only formal ones) as beneficial. She fails to notice that the lack of such restrictions did not lead to chaos and self-destruction at d'Holbach's and Helvétius's salons.

[293] Paradoxically, salons were praised and criticized for the same reasons.

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The formative effect of the ideals of honnêteté on Parisian salons was not limited to the seventeenth century. Honnêteté continued to shape the Enlightenment salons too, paradoxically, often more efficiently than their seventeenth-century predecessors. The limitations on women in salon conversations (to the point of exclusion), which became an accomplished fact during the *siècle des Lumières*, is the best indication of this tendency.

If honnêteté was meant to prevent anarchy caused by transgression, the subservient role of the eighteenth-century salonnière can be considered a triumph of honnêteté. Present-day theories of the allegedly central role of salon women in the French Enlightenment mask their real exclusion, very much in the same way as did the eighteenth-century eulogies.

The salonnières seem to have acknowledged the typically eighteenth-century view designating a submissive role for women *vis-à-vis* men. They sought their legitimacy through presiding over predominantly male, rather than female gatherings.[294] As opposed to their male guests, who had a sense of belonging to an intellectual elite, salonnières sought legitimacy exclusively on an individual basis; each of them was concerned in keeping *her* salon, or in intriguing to locate *her* male guests in the Académie Française, rather than in any form of intellectual liaison with other women contemporary to her.

Thus, as opposed to the seventeenth-century précieuses, eighteenth-century Parisian salonnières did not violate the established order and did not attempt to single themselves out by unconventional behaviour, morals, aspirations, interests or views. Neither did the eighteenth-century salonnières wish to be intellectuals in their own right and a part of the Republic of Letters (which was the dream of Mlle de Scudéry, Mlle de Gournay and Mlle Schurmann). Rather, they confined themselves to the role of

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[294] Although women were not purged from seventeenth-century salons, each salon was organized around a male "core," being a source of authority and attraction: Mme de Rambouillet had Voiture; Mme des Loges had Balzac; Mlle de Scudéry has Pelisson, Chapelain (before they broke) and Sarasin; Mme de Sablé had Jacques Esprit; Mme de la Fayette had Segrais; Mme de Sévigne had Corbinelli.

"mediator" among their literary and intellectual guests; a role with which the seventeenth-century précieuses would hardly have been satisfied.

Socially and aesthetically, too, salons were responding to changes rather than causing them. Preference for literary genres, reflecting the established hierarchy of the arts, and the careful selection of guests, in which politeness was a major prerequisite, all point in the same direction.

As honnêteté was meant to accommodate developments and conflicts within the absolutist monarchy, salon conversation was meant to accommodate unruly topics into a polite discourse accessible to a lay audience. The emergence of male-run sphere of sociability was a response to the restrictions and exclusions involved in this accommodation.

## CHAPTER III

# THE CASE STUDY: SALON WOMEN AND THE QUARRELS OVER FRENCH AND ITALIAN OPERA

> On se souvient encore de la querelle des bouffons, qui pensa devenir une affaire d'état, et dans laquelle le ministère fit intervenir son autorité en faveur de l'Opéra. La discorde n'est pas moins vive aujourd'hui.
>
> La Harpe, *Correspondance littéraire*, Lettre LXIX (1777).

Surprising as it may be, the eighteenth-century quarrels over the French and the Italian opera have attracted more cultural historians than musicologists.[1] The latter, typically preoccupied with tracing the stylistic developments taking place in instrumental music of the time, considered these quarrels a tempest in a teapot and failed to notice or downplayed the relationship between their musical aspects and the broader social, political, and cultural issues of the Enlightenment. [2]In contrast, cultural historians emphasize the context and see the quarrels not as exclusively aesthetic, but concerning social, political and intellectual issues as well. [3]Typically, they focus on the philosophes' support of the Italian opera in the *Querelle des Bouffons* (1752-1754) and interpret it as a camouflaged attack on the Old Regime, safer than an overt one. The assumption involved is that of the allegedly anti-establishment stance of the philosophes, of which the Querelle is just another case. Preoccupied with supporting this assumption, these historians do not pay much attention to the partisans of the French opera, inferring their necessarily "reactionary" stance from the "iconoclastic" writings of the philosophes.

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[1] As early as 1941, the musicologist Paul Henry Lang recognized the Querelle des Bouffons of the 1750s as "an important phase in the history of music" (*Music in Western Civilization*, New York: W. W. Norton & Company, Inc., 1941), p. 548, but subsequent generations of musicologists do nor seem to share this view.

[2] For example, Norbert Dufourcq, *La musique française* (Paris: Picard, 1970); more recently Philip G. Downs also maintained that the Querelle des Bouffons was a "storm in a teacup." *Classical Music. The Era of Haydn, Mozart, and Beethoven* (New York, London: W. W. Norton & Company, 1992), p. 107. Spire Pitou claimed that "The Buffoonist dispute ended without accomplishing anything of enduring importance except for two written works that have continued to interest posterity: Grimm's *Le Petit Prophète de Boehmischbroda* (1752) and Rousseau's *Lettre sur la musique française*." *The Paris Opéra. An Encyclopedia of Operas, Ballets, Composers, and Performers. Rococo and Romantic, 1715-1815* (London, England, Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1985), p. 259. A more comprehensive account can be found in Edward Lowinsky, "Taste, Style and Ideology in Eighteenth-century Music," in *Aspects of the Eighteenth Century*, ed. Earl R. Wasserman (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1965), pp. 163-205,

I propose a different contextualization of the quarrels over the French and the Italian operas, relevant to the main topic of this study and resulting from the observation that the supporters and the opponents of each operatic genre in the Querelle des Bouffons were divided not only along political but also along gender lines: while the philosophes were almost unanimously pro-Italian, salon women took the pro-French stance, considered by the philosophes aesthetically conservative and politically reactionary. Such a division can not be sufficiently explained in the context of the Querelle alone: whereas the philosophes' stance in the Querelle has been interpreted as a result of their assumed progressive aesthetic views or their reaction to the current political developments (such as the suspension of the *Encyclopédie*), that of women had no direct relevance of that kind. The pro-French orientation of the salonnières was an outgrowth of a different development, social rather than political or aesthetic, and related to the transformation of the category of honnêteté into an ideological notion; the development that made it meaningful to present the French opera as *honnête* and the Italian as its opposite. In this chapter I argue that it was precisely this ideological function of honnêteté, rather than aesthetic considerations, that determined the

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and in Elisabeth Cook's entry on the Querelle des Bouffons in *The New Grove Dictionary of Opera*, ed. By Stanley Sadie (London: Macmillan Press Limited, 1992). For a discussion on early eighteenth-century musical quarrels from an aesthetic perspective, see Georgia Cowart, *The Origins of Modern Musical Criticism. French and Italian Music 1600–1750* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1981).

[3] For example, Servando Sacaluga, "Diderot, Rousseau et la querelle musicale de 1752; Nouvelle mise au point," *Diderot Studies* 10 (1968), pp. 133-73; John N. Pappas, "D'Alembert et la Querelle des Bouffons," *Revue d'histoire littéraire* 65 (1965), pp. 479-484; James H. Johnson, "The Encyclopedists and the *Querelle des Bouffons*: Reason and the Enlightenmnet of Sentiment," *Eighteenth-Century Life* 10/2 (1986), pp. 12-27.

position taken by the salonnières in the quarrels over the opera in eighteenth-century France. This position reflected traditional salon philosophy, an extension of the rules of honnêteté over aesthetic, social, moral, and political spheres.

## The Status of the Opera under Louis XIV

From its beginning, opera in France was closely linked with the monarchy and its politics. It was the desire to provide entertainment for the royal court and to achieve his own political ends that prompted Cardinal Mazarin to introduce Italian operatic productions in the French capital in the 1640s. From 1661 opera in France developed under the supervision of Jean-Baptiste Lully, a naturalized Frenchman of Florentine origin, into a genre that was a specifically French incarnation of the classical doctrine, with its primacy of drama over music.

Opera, along with other forms of *spectacles*, was supported by the monarchy for a number of reasons. Spectacles were viewed as a traditional noble entertainment and a form of relaxation from occupations for the welfare and the glory of the state. But seventeenth-century writers emphasized that, as in ancient Greece and Rome, spectacles were useful primarily for political purposes.[4] The nobility had to be continually distracted and impressed, otherwise they might conceive dangerous ideas. Spectacles were also seen as an important propagandistic device against foreign enemies and a means to build Louis XIV's own glorious image for posterity. The *Mercure galant*, in particular, reinforced the view that spectacles played a positive role for the monarchy and its people.[5] Ancient theories were used to support a purely utilitarian purpose: to instill social order, morality and glory.[6]

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[4] For example, Primi Visconti, *Mémoires sur la Cour de Louis XIV*, ed. by Jean Lemoine (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1908), p. 200; Ezéchiel Spanheim, *Relation de la cour de France en 1690* (Paris: Librairie Renouard, 1882), p. 10; Michel de Pure, *Idée des spectacles anciens et nouveaux* (Paris: M. Brunet, 1688; Genève: Minkoff, 1972), p. 96.

[5] For example, Samuel Chappuzeau, *Le théâtre françois* (Paris: J. Bonnassies, 1876); Henri-Philippe de Limiers, *Histoire du règne de Louis XIV*, 2nd rev. ed. (Amsterdam, 1718); [Philippe Quinault], *Le théâtre de Quinault*, 2 vols. (Amsterdam: A. Schelte, 1660); see also the discussion in Robert Isherwood, *Music in the service of the King. France in the Seventeenth Century* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1973), pp. 40ff and 320ff, and Jean-Marie Apostolidès, *Le roi-machine. Spectacle et politique*

The implementation of music in the spectacles, too, reflected this pragmatic orientation often supported by the authority of ancient writers: a text accompanied by music had traditionally been believed to produce a more powerful effect upon the audience than a text with no such accompaniment. Pierre Perrin put forward this argument it in the introduction to the *Pastorale d'Issy*, which was the first attempt to create a uniquely French operatic idiom. Claude Menestrier, a Jesuit priest and writer, emphasized the unique union of music and poetry in opera[7] and Charles Perrault argued in his *Parallèle des Anciens et des Modernes* (1688-1697) that if the opera had existed in Horace's time, he would have introduced it into the political system.[8] Titon du Tillet, too, believed that "music is capable of making the most lively impressions on the spirit and on the human heart and of inspiring the most elevated sentiments."[9]

Numerous seventeenth-century eulogies of the spectacles justified the royal policy, rather than caused it. They were masterpieces of manipulation in trying to combine an ancient belief in the power of music (as able to arouse in people a courageous spirit and feelings of loyalty and devotion) with its contemporary implementation by Louis XIV.

But the opera and the spectacles had their critics, too, and the criticism came from different circles. Opera was viewed through the criteria of the literary classical doctrine as a drama set to music, not as an independent genre, and it was the rules established under this doctrine that opera was expected to follow. The relationship between music and text was therefore a bone of contention: according to the literary doctrine, music should occupy a secondary role, that is, merely to emphasize the dramatic text. Consequently, the leitmotif of seventeenth-century opera criticism was that opera was inconsistent with the principles of literary classical doctrine.

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*au temps de Louis XIV* (Paris: Les Éditions du Minuit, 1981), esp. pp. 148ff.

[6] For example, Claude-François Ménestrier, *Des Ballets anciens et modernes selon les règles du théâtre* (Paris, René Guignard, 1682; Genève: Minkoff, 1972), pp. 29ff.

[7] *Des representations en musique anciennes et modernes* (Paris: R. Guignard, 1681), p. 135; see also his *Des ballets anciens et modernes selon les règles du théâtre* (Paris: R. Guignard, 1682; reprint Genève: Minkoff, 1972).

[8] Charles Perrault, *Parallèle des Anciens et des Modernes*, 2nd ed., 4 vols. (1692-1697; Genève: Slatkine, 1971), III, pp. 282-283.

[9] Evrard Titon du Tillet, *Le Parnasse françois* (Paris, 1732, with supplements in 1743, 1755 and 1760; reprint of 1732-1743 ed., Genève: Minkoff, 1971), p. xvii.

It is not a coincidence then that the most prominent writers of the time were typically ardent critics of the opera. Jean de La Fontaine, for example, considered opera as much less noble and dignified than classical tragédie. Machinery, on which opera was heavily dependent, was a cheap trick, a dazzling device to impress the bourgeoisie; sometimes the machinery did not work properly, which confused the spectator. Supernatural effects often employed in operas violated the principle of vraisemblance; the mixture of three different arts, comedy, singing and ballet, violated the principles govering each of them: the rules of comedy, as established by Horace in his *Ars poetica* did not allow either a great number of actors, or a *deus ex machina*, nor a singing declamation; ballet should not accompany singing; singing required the accompaniment of a discrete instrument, and not the whole orchestra.[10]

La Fontaine's criticism was echoed by other writers: Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux, Jean de La Bruyère and Charles Marguetel de Saint-Denys de Saint-Evremond. In Boileau's view, opera was a revolting orgy which violated all the rational principles of classical drama;[11] La Bruyère considered opera simply boring,[12] although he admitted that different critical standards were needed for an opera than for a drama;[13] and for Saint-Evremond the main appeal of opera was its visual aspect, not its music.[14]

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[10] La Fontaine, "A M. de Niert sur l'opéra" in *Oeuvres diverses*, texte établi et annoté par Pierre Clarac (Paris: Gallimard, 1958), pp. 617-620, n. 16, p. 963. However, La Fontaine's criticism of the opera may not be quite objective as it followed his unsuccessful attempt to contribute to the operatic genre as Lully's librettist, by submitting a text to the opera *Daphné*, rejected by the composer. La Fontaine responded with a satirical poem *Le Florentin*, aimed personally at Lully, followed by the *Epitre à M. de Niert sur l'opéra* in which La Fontaine expanded his criticism to include French opera and its composer. The *epitre* was written probably at the beginning of 1677, but published later; it appeared incomplete in 1715, after La Fontaine's death. Isherwood, *Music in the service of the King*, pp. 244-246.

[11] Nicolas Boileau-Despréaux, "Réflexions critiques," in *Oeuvres complètes*, ed. by Françoise Escal (Paris: Gallimard, 1966), pp. 204-240 and "Epitre IX à Monsieur le Marquis de Seignelay," *Ibid.*, pp. 78-80; also see Alfred Richard Olivier, *The Encyclopedists as Critics of Music* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1947), pp. 5-10.

[12] Jean de La Bruyère, "Les Caractères ou les moeurs de ce siècle," in *Oeuvres complètes de La Bruyère*, ed. by Julien Benda (Paris: Gallimard, 1951), pp. 59-478. In a section "Des ouvrages de l'esprit" La Bruyère writes: "L'on voit bien que l'*Opéra* est l'ébauche d'un grand spectacle; il en donne l'idée. Je ne sais pas comment l'*Opéra*, avec une musique si parfaite et une dépense toute royale, a pu réussir à m'ennuyer." *Ibid.*, p. 79.

In addition to the aesthetic objections raised by men of letters, the criticism of opera came also from Jansenists who feared its potentially detrimental effect on morals.[15] In connection with a licentious text, glamorous decorations and theatrical effects, music was likely to inflame passions and become morally dangerous. While seemingly providing innocent pleasure, theatrical entertainments insidiously excited passions and inspired men to simulate the vanity seen on stage. They made a man happy by diverting him from the view of his domestic sorrows so as to occupy all his thoughts with the care of dancing well.[16] Jacques-Bénigne Bossuet, bishop of Meaux, believed that it was very often the music and theatrical effects that primarily preoccupied the audience, obscuring the message of the text. Moreover, while one is enchanted by the sweetness of the melody or dazed by the marvels of the *spectacle*, believed Bossuet, the sentiments creep in while one is not thinking about them, and conquer the heart without being noticed.[17]

The aesthetic and moral arguments against opera merged with personal attacks against Jean-Baptiste Lully. Having monopolized the production of opera in France as a result of a privilege granted him by the king in 1672, Lully became the personification of the genre and the object of personal attacks by numerous enemies who envied his enormous power and wealth, and detested his musical dictatorship and alleged moral laxity: Molière's comediens expelled from the Palais-Royal to make room for Lully's musicians; dramatists, like La Fontaine, whose libretti were rejected by Lully; other, less successful musicians; and moralists, like Boileau, who called Lully an "odious buffoon" and vilified the composer for his outlandish sexual behaviour.

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[13] "Le caractères ou les moeurs de ce siècle," in *Oeuvres complètes de La Bruyère*, p. 79.

[14] Saint-Evremond, a letter to the Duke of Buckingham, published in the *Mercure* (Feb. 1683), pp. 72-105; the letter was also published in *Miscellanea*, trans. by Spence (London, 1686), pp. 41-61; see also Saint-Evremond, *Oeuvres mêlées* (Paris: C. Barbin, 1689), pp. 77-119; and his play *Les Opéra*, ed. by Robert Finch and Eugène Joliat (Genève: Droz, 1979).

[15] For Jansenists opera was an expensive display of royal vanity. Muffled by Jesuits, who provided support for royal policy, Jansenist criticism of opera intensified towards the end of Louis XIV's reign. See, Isherwood, *Music in the Service of the King*, pp. 320ff.

[16] Blaise Pascal, *Pensées*, ed. Brunschvicg (Paris: Garnier Frères, 1964); Pierre Nicole, "De la comédie" in his *Essais de morale*.

[17] Jacques Bénigne Bossuet, *Maximes et Réflexions sur la comédie* (Paris: Delusseaux,

After Lully's death (1687) the attacks against opera kept appearing, encouraged by Louis XIV's indifference to the genre under the influence of Mme Maintenon and by the artistic mediocrity of operatic productions. The Sorbonne became involved in the controversy and on May 20, 1694, issued a formal condemnation of comedies (followed by additional treatises appearing in 1694): ". . . l'Opéra est d'autant plus dangereux, qu'à la faveur de la Musique dont les tons sont recherchez, & disposez exprés pour toucher, l'ame est bien plus susceptible des passions qu'on veut éxciter, & particulierement de l'amour qui est le sujet le plus ordinaire de cette forme de Comedie."[18]

Despite criticism, however, opera in France did not vanish but flourished. Jansenist criticism did not have much influence on the court, the Académie continued to sponsor regal productions, and the sole result of the Jansenist-Jesuit controversy over spectacles was the expulsion of the Italian comedians from France in May, 1697 (until 1716).[19] Saint-Evremond wrote that it became a fashion to have opera performed at home.[20] Mme de Sévigné, for her part, quite often mentions Lully's operas in her correspondence.[21]

A present-day author attributes this success to the popularity of opera with the public and claims that ". . . the *tragédie lyriques* were well adapted to the tastes of audiences in the

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1728), chap. 3.

[18] Ambroise Lalouette, *Histoire et abrégé des ouvrages latins, italiens et françois, pour et contre la Comédie et Opéra* (Orléans: Robustel, 1697), pp. 87-88.

[19] Isherwood, *Music in the Service of the King*, pp. 331 and 339.

[20] ". . . il n'y a presque pas une maison ou l'on n'en chante des Scenes entieres." Saint-Evremond, *Les Opéra*, ed. by Robert Finch and Eugène Joliat (Geneva: Droz, 1979), p. 3.

[21] For example, about the first Lully/Quinault opera, *Cadmus et Hermione* (1673): a letter of 24 November 1673 to Mme de Grigan: "on répète une musique d'un opéra qui effacera *Venise*," see: Mme de Sévigné, *Correspondance*, ed. by Roger Duchêne, 3 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1972-1978), I, p. 627; about the *Proserpine* (1680) in a letter of 9 February 1680 to Mme de Grignan: "L'opéra est au-dessus de tous les autres" (II, 833); "Je veux parler de l'opéra. Je ne l'ai point vu (je ne suis point curieuse de me divertir), mais on dit qu'il est parfaitement beau" (II, 857).

1670s and 1680s."[22] The public wanted to be pleased (by opera), rather than instructed (by classical drama). Mme de Sévigné, for example, made it explicit that she could never prefer Racine to Corneille, who carried her away and made her shiver.[23]

Indeed, Lully created a new form of entertainment, more attractive for the general audience than traditional theatrical genres, combining tragedy and music, adorned by ballets, machines and changes of decorations. But the support of the public alone would not guarantee the opera the prestige it enjoyed in the France of Louis XIV. The fate of the opera was not determined by the public, but by the king himself: opera became an instrument of royal policy, deliberately supported despite criticism and the high cost of production.[24] Importantly, the royal support was not extended to all operas, but directed at the type of opera created by Lully seen as specifically French in spirit, politically reflecting the splendour and grandiosity of the monarchy, and aesthetically combining (as successfully as it was possible) the classical literary doctrine with music, never completely subordinating the text to the music. This was the type of opera Louis XIV elevated to the principal form of the royal entertainment and initiated the tradition in France that identified the opera with the absolute monarchy.

It was thus the royal support that gave opera in France its legitimate place among the divertissements of honnête persons. The Lettres patentes establishing the *Académies d'opéra ou représentations en musique en langue française sur le pied de celles d'Italie*, issued by Louis XIV in 1669, granted ladies and members of the nobility the right to participate in the performances without detracting from their noble station.[25] In 1715 Jacques Bonnet could write in his *Histoire de la musique* that ". . . [opera in France] est le plus agréable divertissement qu'un honnête homme puisse prendre aujourd'hui."[26] Later in the century, Rémond de Saint-Mard Toussaint published the following eulogy of the opera:

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[22] Buford Norman, "Anciens and Moderns, Tragedy and Opera: The Quarrel over Alceste,"in Georgia Cowart, ed., *French Musical Thought 1600-1800* (Ann Arbor/London: UMI Research Press 1989), pp. 182-183.

[23] A letter of 16 March, 1672. *Correspondance*, I, p. 459.

[24] See Isherwood, *Music in the Service of the King*, p. 332; Catherine Kinzler, *Jean-Philippe Rameau. Splendeur et naufrage de l'esthétique du plaisir à l'âge classique* (Paris: La Sycomore, 1983), p. 140.

[25] Isherwood, *Music in the Service of the King*, pp. 175-176.

> . . . l'Opera purge les moeurs, & les purge tout aussi-bien, que les genres de Poesies, qu'on regarde comme les plus moraux. . . . ce n'est pas la Musique que nous gâte: nous serions meilleurs que nous ne sommes, si nous étions bien sensibles à ses charmes: par elle se nourrit & s'entretient la sensibilité: par elle nous devenons humains, compatissans, charitables; peut-être . . . nous rend-elle quelquefois un peu trop tendre; mais depuis quand l'Amour délicat est-il un si grand crime?[27]

## The Beginning of the Controversy over French and Italian Opera

Italian operatic productions that were introduced by Cardinal Mazarin in France in the 1640s. The criticism levelled at Mazarin by his political opponents merged with the criticism of the operas, especially of the high cost of the machinery and the production of Italian operas, and Italian musicians became a target of the rage of the Frondeurs in Paris in June 1648.[28] After the Fronde had ended in 1654, the Italians had to face a tide of national feeling and the birth of the genuinely French concept of the opera (Lully) that took place at that time.

In the novel *Arthamène, ou Le Grand Cyrus* (1649-1653) Mlle de Scudéry included an episode in which she alludes to the dispute over the French and the Italian opera. In a metaphorical convention typical for the novel, Mme de Scudéry writes about two different kinds of music, Lydian and Phrygian, apparently standing for French and Italian music respectively:

> . . . il y auoit alors à Sardis [capitale de la Lydie], grand nombre de Musiciens de Phrigie: & comme vous sçavez que la Musique Lydienne & la Phrygienne, passent pour les plus admirables de toute l'Asie, & même de toute la Terre: ceux qui auoient entendu les vns & les autres auoient des sentimens differens, selon la conformité qu'il y auoit de leurs inclinations à ces diuerses harmonies. Ceux qui estoient melancholiques, ou qui auoient l'âme passionnée, donnoient le prix aux Lydiens: & ceux de qui le tempérament

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[26] Jacques Bonnet, *Histoire de la musique et de ses effets depuis son origine jusq'à présent* (Paris, 1715; Genève: Slatkine, 1969), p. 340.

[27] Rémond de Saint-Mard Toussaint, *Réflexions sur l'opéra* (La Haye: Jean Neaulme, 1741), pp. 100-103.

[28] Isherwood, *Music in the service of the King*, p. 125.

> estoit plus guay, le donnoient aux Phrigiens: les vns & les autres tombant toutesfois d'accord, qu'ils méritoient tous beaucoup de loüange . . .[29]

Mlle de Scudéry locates the controversy on an aesthetic plane and alludes to Platonic theory assuming the influence of particular musical modes on human temperament.[30] Although she does not develop the topic nor does she reveal her own views on the dispute over French and Italian opera, Mlle de Scudéry is one of the first authors to indicate the issue that was to become an object of recurring disputes throughout the eighteenth century, far exceeding its aesthetic dimension.

The criticism of Italian music in France was probably first launched in writing in 1659 by Pierre Perrin (1619-1695), a poet and an author of comedies set to music by Robert Cambert. In his letter to the archbishop of Turin, dwelling upon the opposition against the opera *Orpheo*, Perrin reproached Italian music for its excessive passion and pretentious beauty which easily turns into extravagance,[31] thus foreshadowing the main arguments used in the future quarrels on the topic. Perrin was very much in tune with the anti-Italian climate and the tide of national feeling which followed Mazarin's death, when he appealed to French self-sufficiency as an argument for writing operas in the French language.

In 1688, a year after Lully's death, the debate on italianism in music was grafted onto the literary quarrel of the anciens and moderns. A eulogy of Lully's opera *Orphée*, included in Perrault's poem the *Siècle de Louis le Grand*, was countered by an allegoric pamphlet by François de Callières, reproaching Lully's "boring" recitatives,[32] but the polemics were not continued, primarily because Italian music was not yet well known in France. It was only after the treaty of Pignerol in 1697, which reestablished peace between France and Savoy, that more and more Italian music was imported into France—a real "invasion" documented by numerous sources of the time.[33] The old dispute over the legitimacy of the operatic genre in the light of classical doctrine appeared less relevant as the necessity to resist the influx of Italian music became the issue of the day and gave priority to the dispute over the question of which music is superior: French or Italian. The dispute culminated in a polemic between two authors: Abbé François Raguenet, advocating the supremacy of Italian music[34] and Lecerf de la Viéville, defending the French musical tradition.[35]

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[29] Mlle de Scudéry, *Arthamène, ou le Grand Cyrus*, 10 vols. (1656; Genève: Slatkine, 1972) V, p. 82.

[30] Plato, *The Works of Plato*, trans. Jowett, 4 vols. (New York, n.d.), *Republic*, iv 2, 140-141. According to Plato, the Ionian and Lydian modes are harmful because they produce softness of character and are associated with drunkenness; therefore they should be removed from a well-governed republic. The Dorian and Phrygian modes inspire courage and are recommended for the state.

[31] Paul-Marie Masson, "Musique italienne et musique française. La première querelle," *Rivista Musicale Italiana* 19 (1912), p. 520.

[32] François de Callières, *Histoire poètique de la guerre récement survenue entre les Anciens et les Modernes* (Amsterdam, 1688; Genève: Slatkine, 1977).

The change in the priority of issues involved a shift on the aesthetic level and the new dispute turned the old arguments against opera upside down: Lully's operas were now seen as the epitome of the French national musical style; Lully himself as the French musican *par excellence* and, in the eyes of the pro-Italian party, a representative of what was conservative and literary-oriented. Italian music, instead, was considered by its advocates as innovative and ruled by musical precepts alone. In other words, while previously Lully was considered "modern" in the quarrel on the legitimacy of opera as a genre, he was now considered *ancien*. Fontenelle, for example, who in the former controversy was favourable to opera as a genre (exemplified by Lully's operas),[36] in 1702, in his capacity as a censor, gave sympathetic approval for Raguenet's eulogy of Italian music. Similarly, those who advocated the legitimacy of the opera using Lully's operas as examples, like Charles Perrault, were now regarded as "old" by the pro-Italian party.

The polemics between Abbé Raguenet and Lecerf de la Viéville on the merits and faults of French and Italian music set the tone and the major arguments for the subsequent disputes on French and Italian opera for the rest of the century. From the outset there was no doubt that Abbé Raguenet and the pro-Italian party represented what an honnête discourse referred to as savant and pedantic, and Lecerf de la Viéville with his pro-French stance represented the ideals of an honnête discourse. While Raguenet's pamphlet was in the form of a treatise, Lecerf's refutation was in the form of dialogues between men and women of polite society (the Chevalier being a porte-parole of the author himself). While Raguenet published his treatise under his own name, Lecerf published his dialogues anonymously. While Raguenet simply presented his views, Lecerf's discourse was honnête according to the strictest rules: not only did he avoid specialized language, lengthy passages, and an argumentative tone, but he also found it appropriate to make his discourse attractive to ladies, for example, by avoiding too many examples.[37]

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[33] Masson, "Musique italienne et musique française," p. 526.

[34] François Raguenet, *Parallèle des Italiens et des Français en ce qui regarde la musique et les opéras* (Paris: Lean Moreau, 1702), followed by *Défense du Parallèle des Italiens et des Français* (Paris: Barbin, 1705).

[35] [Jean Laurent Lecerf de La Viéville, sieur de Fresneuse], *Comparaison de la musique italienne et de la musique françoise, ou en examinant en détails les avantages des spectacles et le mérite des compositeurs des deux nations, on montre quelles sont les vraies beautés de la musique* (1704); 2nd ed. (Bruxelles: François Foppens, 1705-1706; Genève: Minkoff, 1972).

[36] See Fontenelle, "Digression sur les Anciens et les Modernes" in *Oeuvres diverses de M. Fontenelle*, 5 vols. (La Haye: Antoine van Dole, 1736), III, p. 160.

The arguments used by Lecerf de la Viéville to defend French music in response to Abbé Raguenet's book were based on classical doctrine. Lecerf, although the best-known advocate of French music, did not express any personal views but repeated current opinions circulating in the circles of men of letters and musicians.[38] French music achieved the classical ideal, the juste milieu, which expressed itself through its regularity, proper balance, simplicity, naturalness and rationality. "J'appelle . . . naturel ce qui est composé de tons qui s'offrent naturellement, ce qui n'est pas composé de tons recherchés extraordinaires. J'appelle simple ce qui n'est pas chargé d'agréments, d'accords."[39] Italian music, on the other hand, was capricious, exaggerated, extravagant and exuberant; thus violating the principles of classical doctrine. While French music was "natural," Italian was "bizarre" [*le chant detourné*]. "La simplicité est la compagne inséparable de la nature, & les Musiciens Italiens ne connoissent ni l'une ni l'autre."[40] ". . . une Brunette de Lambert est un bouquet de violette, un air de Lulli, un bouquet de jasmin, dont l'odeur un peu plus forte n'a pourtant rien qui entête; & un air Italien un gros bouquet de tubereuses."[41] While French music provided pleasure for the mind and appealed to reason, Italian was merely a sensual pleasure for the ears.

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[37] Lecerf de la Viéville, *Comparaison*, 2e dialogue, p. 81.

[38] Similarly, not all Italian music imported to France could be described in the negative terms ascribed to it by the defenders of French music; it was the stereotype of Italian music that Viéville was really addressing.

[39] Lecerf de La Viéville, *Comparaison*, sixième dialogue, p. 302.

[40] *Ibid.*, deuxième dialogue, p. 54.

[41] *Ibid.*, sixième dialogue, p. 305.

The simplicity of French music made it understandable for everybody, "the people,"[42] whereas Italian music was savante, far from natural, too preoccupied with musical technique, unnecessarily complicated and hence comprehensible only for those who knew the rules. Thus, even if Italian music was meant primarily to please, it failed to do so as it was understandable only for connoisseurs and savants; instead, French music, simple and natural, could really please the public.

Lecerf claimed that in the eyes of its proponents, the savants, Italian music was superior to French because it was difficult. "Il ne tient pas à eux que la Musique ne devienne une espece de Cabale, une Science mysterieuse, enveloppée d'une redoutable obscurité, qui en pût éloigner les prophanes les peuple."[43] In fact, wrote Lecerf de la Viéville, technicality [*la science*] itself has no value; it is meaningful only when it helps to embellish nature. Writing for polite society, Lecerf abundantly used metaphors which presumably had a strong appeal to this audience, in particular metaphors referring to various categories of women. Just as a chambermaid is merely a servant to a mistress, the technique is only a means to achieve a perfect immitation of nature.

> La Nature est une beauté, qu'il faut habiller, de fois à autre, elle a besoin d'être parée. La Science est une femme de chambre, dont l'emploi & l'honneur est de sçavoir la parer: qu'elle la pare mal comme elle fait la parant mal à propos, en la parant trop ou trop souvent, elle méritera d'être chassé. Et ces Messieurs les Italiens font de la Maitresse la Servante & de la Servante la Maitresse.[44]

Italian music stood as a symbol of corruption of taste, vanity, pretentiousness and exaggeration, that is, of what had been identified with false preciosity. French music gave its listener peace of mind, because it used simple and natural musical discourse; Italian music produced the opposite result: it fuelled passions and could gain control over its listener.[45] Being "possessed" by music was not, for Lecerf, the French way. "Rien n'est si dangereux, ni si vicieux, que s'abandonner à son génie; de laisser aller la vivacite d'une imagination échauffé aussi loin qu'elle veut . . ."[46] Not only was it a source of corruption of taste, but it was not honnête either: it violated the rule of juste milieu and the self-control involved in it, and rendered a "possessed" person ridiculous. (As I will discuss later in this chapter, violation of the principles of honnêteté by an excessive involvement in music was the reason why the most devoted eighteenth-century Parisian music lovers and patrons—the baron de Bagge and La Pouplinière—were an object of contemporary satire, and were never taken seriously as authorities in musical matters.)

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[42] Titon du Tillet wrote that "his [Lully's] songs were so natural and of such insinuating charm, that if anybody had a love of music and a good ear, he could remember them quite easily at the fourth or fifth hearing; so that both persons of distinction and ordinary people sang the greater parts of his operatic arias. It is said that Lully was delighted to hear his songs sung on the Pont-Neuf and at street corners, with other words than those in the opera." Romain Rolland, *Some musicians of former days*, transl. by Mary Blaiklock (New York: Books for Libraries Press, 1968), pp. 247-248.

[43] Lecerf de la Viéville, *Comparaison*, quatrième dialogue, p. 95.

[44] *Ibid.*, p. 99.

Making music, argued Lecerf, should be placed within the confines of the juste-milieu; exaggeration in practicing music put an amateur too close to a professional and therefore was inappropriate for an honnête person. It was, however, precisely the ambition of the savants who supported the Italian music: since performing Italian music required skill and practice, their self-respect [*amour-propre*] was flattered when they acquired an adequate level of musical accomplishment. Thus, the fashion of studying music excessively resulted, according to Lecerf, from the desire to perform Italian pieces, since French music did not require a high level of accomplishment.

> Joüer des Pieces pour s'amuser soi-même agréablement, ou pour divertir la Maitresse ou son Ami est au dessous d'eux [les Italiens]. Mais se cloüer trois ou quatre ans sur un Clavessin, pour parvenir enfin à la gloire d'être membre d'un concert, d'être assis entre deux violons & une basse de violon de l'Opera, & de brocher, bien ou mal, quelques accords, qui ne seront entendues de personne: voilà leur noble ambition.[47]

Moreover, purely instrumental music (epitomized by Italian *sonatas*), appealing to the senses alone and lacking any moral purpose, was, according to Viévile, unworthy to occupy honnête persons.[48] Music should instruct, purify passions, and provide pleasant and innocent recreation worthy of an honnête person at his times of leisure and rest.[49] As vocal music was superior to instrumental, singing was superior to playing musical instruments and while it was natural and therefore acceptable for an honnête person to accompany oneself singing, it was inappropriate merely to accompany others.

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[45] *Ibid.*, troisième dialogue, p. 92.

[46] *Ibid.*, deuxième dialogue, pp. 77-78.

[47] *Ibid.*, quatrième dialogue, p. 105.

[48] ". . . sans le naturel & l'expression, la Musique est une fadaise, un badinage

> . . . les François qui s'addonent à l'accompagnement, devroient songer en effet qu'il ne convient point à d'honnêtes gens de choisir le second rôle, quand ils peuvent faire le premier, & outre que chanter est le premier rôle en Musique, il y a à chanter je ne sçai quoi de cavalier & de dégagé, qui convient mieux à un homme de qualité, que l'embras & la servitude de l'accompagnement.[50]

To strengthen his arguments against accompaniment, Lecerf de la Viéville phrased them in the language of the contemporary *querelle des femmes*, using the negative connotations associated with *préciosité*: "C'est faire le précieux ou la précieuse [wrote Lecerf] de se piquer de ne point chanter sans théorbe."[51]

It was only one step further to extend the metaphors associated with the coquettes and précieuses on the one hand, and honnête women on the other, over the whole discourse on Italian and French music respectively.

> . . . la musique Italienne ressemble à une Coquette aimable, quoique bien fardée, remplie de vivacité, & oû ours le pied en l'air, cherchant à briller par tout sans raison, & sans savoir pourquoi, comme une évaporée, qui fait voir ses emportements dans quelque sujet qu'elle puisse traiter . . .Ne diroit-on pas que le serieux devient comique entre ses mains . . .[52]

As opposed to the Italian, French music could be compared to a beautiful and dignified lady, ". . . dont la beauté simple, naturelle, & sans art, attire les coeurs de tous ceux qui la regardent, & qui n'a qu'à se montrer pour plaire, sans craindre d'être défaite par les minauderies affectées d'une Coquette outrée."[53]

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d'enfant, indigne d'occuper d'honnête gens." *Ibid.*, cinquième dialogue, p. 161.

[49] *Ibid.*, quatrième dialogue, p. 110.

[50] *Ibid.*, p. 108.

[51] *Ibid.*, troisième dialogue, p. 101; Lecerf quotes here Bénigne de Bacilly's treatise, *Remarques curieuses sur l'art de bien chanter* (Paris: Ballard, 1668), p. 20.

[52] Lecerf de La Viéville, *Comparaison*, pp. 294-300.

[53] *Ibid.*, pp. 294-300.

However, Lecerf de la Viéville does not suggest that it was Parisian salonnières who had a particular taste for Italian music. In fact, the opposite is true. Among those who were most enthusiastic about it he lists "savants," musically-educated amateurs, some professional musicians and men of quality, and the prelates, "qui ne chantent plus ne font plus jouer chès eux que des Pièces Italiennes, des Sonates."[54] The general public, instead, deem to have remained faithful to the French musical art, identified with the tragédies lyriques by Lully, and simple *airs* by composers such as Lambert and Camus. Lecerf supported his defence of French music by referring to the authority of ladies: according to the fair sex, he wrote, Italian music could hardly be charming; rather, ladies were bored and annoyed with a quarter-of-an-hour long sonata. They preferred listening to French *airs* and fragments from operas by Lully rather than to "les batteries & les harpegements d'un violon touché savamment, auquel elles ne connoissent rien, & ne sentent rien qui les attire . . ."To further support his contentions, Lecerf emphasized that it was the women who decided "du mérite & du destin des ouvrages dans les Spectacles, & à qui nous devons charcher à plaire, sur-tout dans cet Art qui semble être fait pour elles."[55]

The Parisian salon women themselves confirmed their pro-French stance over the Italian. Mme de Sévigné, who otherwise dealt with music rather incidentally in her *Correspondance*, declared to have seen almost all operas by Lully and had a lot of admiration for music by "Baptiste," as she called him. Furthermore, as I pointed out in the previous chapter, Parisian salonnières followed the honnête ideal of not getting involved in excessive music making. Except for Ninon de Lenclos, none of them was an accomplished musician; they were at best average amateurs and listeners. Mlle de Scudéry, although interested in playing the lute, decided against practicing playing it as it would take too much of her time at the cost of other, more intellectual studies she preferred pursuing.

From the very beginning the quarrel over French and Italian music was flavoured with political and social undertones, which would become even more prominent in the Querelle des Bouffons and in the Gluck-Piccini dispute later in the century: the supporters of French music considered themselves "politically correct," as they were backed up by the authority of the king, as well as that of the majority of the honnêtes persons. For Lecerf de la Viéville the dispute over French and Italian music, too, was not only an aesthetic debate, but also a political one. Those who supported French musical taste were considered by Lecerf as the party ". . . fidèle au goût de sa Patrie . . . [qui] ne peut souffrir sans indignation que l'on méprise, dans la Ville Capitale du Royaume, le bon goût de la Musique Françoise, & traite la Musique Italienne de bizzare, de capricieuse, & comme une revoltée contre les règles de l'Art."[56] After all, Lecerf argued, it was the king himself who shared the French musical taste and therefore determined the right stance in the dispute: ". . . depuis la mort de Lulli, il n'a point changé de goût: il a conservé hautement celui-là, quoiqu'on ait tâché de lui en faire changer."[57] Although among the supporters of Italian music were people of higher social order, the king was pro-French.

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[54] *Ibid.*, 1st ed., pp. 53-54.
[55] *Ibid.*, 1st ed., pp. 300-301.

> les grands Seigneurs ne sont que des hommes comme nous, de qui le nom prouve peu de chose. Chacun a sa voix, & les voix sont égales, ou du moins ce ne feroit pas la qualité qui en feroit le poids. Main en cas que vous vous en remettiez aux autoritez, nous en avons une pour nous, à laquelle vous pouvez déferer. Le Roi. . . . Le Roi, dis-je, est de nôtre côté.[58]

The Abbé Raguenet, on his part, could only argue that Italian music was supported by the duc d'Orléans, the future Regent.[59]

Less explicit, but clear enough, were the metaphors of political order and stability used by Lecerf to characterize French music, as opposed to the metaphors of political disorder describing the Italian. French music was orderly and kept under control; Italians, instead, took absolute liberty (harmonic, rhythmic and tonal) to produce their music and they were constantly searching for new effects. French music was based on consonances, Italian was rich in dissonances and frequent modulations. The traditional ideal of French music was one voice solo or with modest instrumental accompaniment merely supporting the voice; Italian music did not observe this hierarchy: there were usually many voices, equal in importance. French music did not violate the laws of nature and used only natural human voices, Italian used *castrati*. Finally, the very system of organization and production of the most prominent musical form of the time, the opera, reflected two opposite orientations of the two countries: while French opera had its institutional base in the *Académie Royale de Musique*, an official and respected agency supported by the state, in Italy opera was a private enterprise.

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[56] *Ibid.*, 1st ed., p. 293.
[57] *Ibid.*, troisième dialogue, p. 319.
[58] *Ibid.*, sixième dialogue, p. 348.
[59] Raguenet, *Défense du Parallèle des Italiens et des Français*, p. 51.

Through the dispute between the Abbé Raguenet and Lecerf de la Viéville, the debate over tFrench and Italian music entered the eighteenth century with its main arguments already formulated and the main actors located on the aesthetic, political and social scene.

### Lullists contra Ramists, 1733-1752

The controversy over French and Italian music entered a new stage in October 1733, the date of the premiere of the opera *Hippolyte et Aricie* by Jean-Philippe Rameau; this time it took the form of a dispute over the operatic styles of Lully and Rameau. Although the attacks were directed at Rameau's, not at Italian operas, it was precisely because they were viewed as the epitome of that which since the beginning of the century had been labelled as "italianism" in music, violating the true French operatic tradition established by Lully. In the preface to his second opera, the *Indes galantes* (1735), Rameau found it appropriate to declare his affiliation with the aesthetics of Lully, but he refused to be his servile imitator. As the attacks did not cease, Rameau refuted them again in 1738 and in a more explicit manner emphasized his indebtedness to Lully.[60]

But the perception of Rameau's music did not change. Aesthetically, the arguments used against his operatic style were similar to those known from the polemical exchange between the Abbé Raugenet and Lecerf de la Viéville earlier in the century. Rameau was being accused of making music the major ingredient of his operas (in an Italian fashion) and thus violating the classical doctrine (and the French tradition) which relegated music to a subordinate role supporting the text.[61] The marquise du Châtelet commented about Rameau's operas in January of 1737:

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[60] "J'ai toujours considéré Lully comme un grand maitre et ne l'ai jamais cité que pour le louer." *Remarques de M. Rameau sur l'extrait qu'on a donné de son livre intitulé: Génération harmonique dans le Journal de Trévoux, décembre 1737*, in *Pour et contre . . . par l'auteur des* *Mémoires d'un homme de qualité* [l'abbé Prévost], 20 vols. (Paris: Didot, 1733-1740), XIV (1738), pp. 78-79.

> N'ayant plus à l'opéra la voix de mlle la Maire pour chanter le récitatif de Lully je n'y regrette que la musique de Rameau qui me plairait infiniment s'il voulait s'attacher à dialoguer ses scènes, car puisqu'il y en a personne ne peut disconvenir qu'il serait à souhaiter qu'il fût bien déclamé. C'est de plus le goût de la nation et je ne le trouve point déraisonnable. On peut accorder la pompe et la force de la musique, le fracas de l'orchestre, la pléntitude des accompagnements avec le pathétique de la déclamation.[62]

In a letter of 20 July, 1739, marquis d'Argenson wrote to Voltaire: "Je suis bien plus dégoutté de Ramau [sic] et de toutes musique étrangère depuis quelques jours que je ne l'étois."[63] In a similar vein Voltaire wrote to the Prince Royal of Prussia in September of that year that "Rameau travaille à mettre à la mode la musique italienne."[64] This, in the eyes of Rameau's critics, meant no less than replacing Lully's operas with the Italian ones, that is, the national with the ultramontane, the dignified with the trivial, and the honnête with the savante, precisely because "French opera" and "Italian opera" were fixed categories denoting not only aesthetic, but also social and political orientations. From this perspective it is understandable why the dispute grew in intensity to such a point that an anonymous author wrote in 1749 that: ". . . on vit en France deux partis violents et extrêmes, acharnés les uns contre les autres; l'ancienne et la nouvelle musique fut pour chacqun d'eux une espèce de religion pour laquelle ils prisent tous les armes."[65]

The perception of the differences between Italian and French music had not changed since the polemics between the Abbé Raguenet and Lecerf de la Viéville. In 1736, Nicolas Cartaud de la Vilate wrote in the same vein as Lecerf in 1704 that "La musique Italienne livrée aux méditations d'une oreille sçavante, néglige trop les intérêts du coeur."[66] Some years later, Rémont de Saint-Mard Toussaint pointed at the superficiality of Italian operas flattering the ears rather than appealing to the soul.

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[61] *Nouveaux amusements du coeur et de l'esprit* (1739), vol. IV, p. 403.

[62] A letter of 16 January [1737] to Nicolas Claude Thieriot, *Les lettres de la Marquise Du Châtelet*, ed. by Theodore Besterman, 2 vols. (Genève: Institut et Musée Voltaire, 1958), I, pp. 164-165.

[63] *Correspondance de Voltaire*, ed. by Theodore Besterman, 107 vols. (Genève: Institut et Musée Voltaire, 1953), IX, p. 164.

[64] *Ibid.*, II, p. 219.

[65] Abbé de La Porte (ed.), *Observations sur la littérature moderne*, 9 vols. (La Haye, 1749-1752), I (1749), p. 202.

> En general le grand vice des Operas italiens est de ne travailler que pour les oreilles qu'ils ne flattent pas toujours: on dit néanmoins qu'ils songent quelquefois à imiter & à peindre; mais ce n'est jamais les passions. Le but de nos Operas & en general de notre Musique est plus beau, on y travaille tant qu'on peut à exprimer les passions, & par-là on nous rend le service de remuer quelquefois les nôtres: aussi faut-il avouer que de toute la Musique de nôtre est la plus touchante, la plus gracieuse & la plus pathetique, peut-être, il est vrai, en est-elle moins sçavante; mais est-ce un si grand malheur, & ne nous suffit-il pas quelle soit plus agréable?[67]

Just as Italian music at the beginning of the century, Rameau's operas were accused of eccentricity, bizarreness, superficiality, lack of measure and excessive dissonances. Most of the audience of the *Hippolyte and Aricie*, wrote an anonymous author in 1734, believed that the instruments were out of tune: their sound was painful even to the least delicate ears. But they were informed in a dogmatic manner that they were dissonances meant to express the masterpiece of art.[68] All in all, Rameau's *Hippolyte* made a poor impression: "Toujours de la tristesse au lieu de tendresse, le singulier était du baroque, la fureur, du tintamarre; au lieu de gaité, du turbulent, et jamais de gentilesse, ni rien qui pût aller au coeur . . ."[69]

Furthermore, Rameau's music was considered savante and unnecessarily complicated. After the first performance of *Hippolyte et Aricie* in 1733, *Mercure de France* published an epigram:

> Si le difficile est le beau,
> C'est un grand homme que Rameau;

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[66] Nicolas Cartaud de la Vilate, *Essai historique et philosophique sur le goût* (Paris: de Maudouyt, 1736; Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1970), p. 293.

[67] Rémond de Saint-Mard Toussaint, *Réflexions sur l'opéra*, p. 90.

[68] ". . . la plupart des spectateurs s'écrient que les instruments étaient faux; leur sons faisaient peine aux oreilles les moins délicates; on leur déclara dogmatiquement que c'étaient des dissonances faites exprès et le chef-d'oeuvre de l'art . . . beaucoup de bruit, force de fredons . . ." "Lettre de M. *** à Mlle *** sur l'origine de la musique," *Mercure*, May 1734, pp. 867-869. Rémond de Saint-Mard, too, accused Rameau of the lack of naturalness in in his operas. See Rémond de Saint-Mard, *Réflexions sur l'opéra*, p. 60.

[69] *Ibid.*, p. 61.

Mais si le beau par aventure
N'était que la simple nature,
Quel petit homme que Rameau![70]

Rameau himself, too, was viewed as a savant who conceived music through intellectual speculation and a combination of notes and harmonies, not by making it "touching to the soul." Such an interpretation was all the more easier because before launching on the composition Rameau was known as the author of two theoretical treatises on music: the *Traité de l'harmonie* (1722) and the *Nouveau système de musique théorique* (1726). It was the aura of the "savant" surrounding Rameau that made an anonymous author write after the presentation of the *Hippolyte et Aricie* that "Tous travaillent à l'envi à composer de la musique, chacun ventait son travail et la peine qu'il s'était donnée; les géometres même s'en mêlèrent . . ."[71] The epithet *géomètre* caught on. In 1736, Cartaud de la Vilate wrote that "L'harmonie de Rameau prend un ton géomètre qui effarouche le coeur et n'offre que de grandes vérites d'algèbre."[72] Some years later, another author alluded to "des musiciens géometrès" with Rameau in mind,[73] and still another asked rhetorically: "La géométrie, introduite dans la musique, retranche des fautes; produit-elle des beautés?"[74]In similar fashion, the marquis d'Argenson called Rameau's opera *Zoroastre* (1749) "barbare" and considered him "as is generally the case among modern composers . . . more capable of the technical than what is touching on agreeable."[75]

In the eyes of his critics, by composing music that was savante, bizarre, and comprehensible only to connoisseurs, Rameau contributed to the general corruption of taste.

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[70] As quoted by Enrico Fubini, *Les philosophes et la musique* (Paris: Champion, 1983), p. 95.

[71] "Lettre de M. *** à Mlle *** sur l'origine de la musique," *Mercure*, May 1734, pp. 867-869.

[72] Nicolas Cartaud de la Vilate, *Essai historique et philosophique sur le goût* (Paris: de Maudouyt, 1736; Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1970), pp. 292-293.

[73] A.-G. Meusnier de Querlon, *Reglement pour l'Opéra de Paris* (A Utopie [Paris?]: chez Thomas Morus, 1743), p. 9.

[74] Pierre-Charles Roy, *Lettre sur l'opéra* in *Lettres sur quelques écrits de ce temps*, ed. by Elie Fréron, 2 vols. (Genève: Slatkine, 1749-1754), II, (1749), p. 20.

[75] *Notices sur les ouvres de théatre*, 2 vols., in *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* ed. T. Besterman, vols. 42-43, II, pp. 497, 531-2; as quoted by Weber, "*La musique ancienne*," pp. 74-75.

In 1737 an anonymous author found only decorations and costumes worth praising in Rameau's opera *Persée*.

> . . . on n'ose pas dire tout haut la même chose du poème et de la musique [wrote the author], tant le mauvais goût prend le dessus. Ceux qui n'osent pas encore lever le masque disent que cela est beau, mais que cela ennuie; il leur faut du Rameau pour les éveiller. La musique de passion faite pour le coeur et le sentiment n'est point leur fait. C'est là cependant, Monsieur, presque le goût général, et il n'y a que peu de gens qui échappent à la corruption.[76]

In contrast to the *Persée*, Lully's opera *Atys*, also staged in 1737, was a great success with the public and, as noted by *Mercure*, ". . . les partisans de la nouvelle musique [Rameau's] ont perdu l'espérance dont ils s'étaient flattés, et le succès de ce magnifique opéra est une prevue certaine que le bon goût n'est pas encore détruit en France."[77]

The reason for the corruption of taste in music, according to Rémond de Saint-Mard Toussaint (1741), was the excessive value attached to the studied and bizzare music which gave a person who preferred it the aura of appearing savant. It was no longer sensitivity to beauty (which is a natural gift that costs nothing) that mattered, wrote Rémond de Saint-Mard in 1741, but knowledge which was costly to acquire, that is, formal knowledge that made one a savant. Beauty has the aura of easiness and simplicity and therefore appears worthless, while singularity and bizarreness appear difficult and hence desirable.[78] ". . . telle est la bassese de la vanité, que pour s'attirer une considération plus étendûe & plus pleine on affecte quelquefois d'aimer & d'estimer un singulier & un mauvais, que dans le fond de son coeur l'on hait & l'on méprise."[79] What Rémond de Saint-Mard was describing was, in fact, the clash of two approaches to art, one honnête, based on taste (*le goût*), another savant, based on the knowledge of rules. While the first, rare as it is, everybody is believed to have, the other is available only to few connoisseurs.

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[76] *Nouvelles à la main des années 1734-1739*, letter of 16 February, 1737, as quoted by Paul-Marie Masson, "Lullistes et Ramistes," p. 193.

[77] *Mercure de France*, February 1738, pp. 324-325.

[78] ". . . c'est qu'a aimer une Musique recherchée & bizarre, on se donne l'honneur de paroitre sçavant. Honneur qui est extrêmement précieux, parce qu'on se le fait rendre generalement par tout le monde. Car tout le monde sçait ce qu'il coûte pour acquérir des connoissances; tout le monde tient compte de la peine & du mérite qu'il y a à être devenu sçavant. Il n'en est pas ainsi de la sensibilité pour les belles choses: comme c'est un don naturel qui n'a rien coûté, un don que tout rare qu'il est tout le monde croit avoir, il arrive que la vanité ne voyant pas assez de gain dans l'attachement qu'on a naturellement pour le beau, parce que le beau a l'air facile, parce qu'il est simple, parce qu'il est naturel se tourne du côté du difficile, du singulier, de l'extraordinaire, & ce dont on ne sçauroit être assez indigné;. . . " telle est la bassese de la vanité, que pour s'attirer une considération plus étendûe & plus pleine on affecte quelquefois d'aimer & d'estimer un singulier & un mauvais, que dans le fond de son coeur l'on hait & l'on méprise." Rémond de Saint-Mard Toussaint, *Réflexions sur l'opéra*, pp. 51-52.

The accusations of the lack of naturalness and simplicity launched against Rameau's operas by his critics were interpreted to Rameau's advantage by his supporters. Diderot, for example, in his *Les Bijoux indiscrets*, put it in a metaphorical but unambiguous way: "La vieux Utmiutsol [Lully] est simple, naturel, uni, trop uni quelquefois; et c'est sa faute. Le jeune Utrémifasolasiututut [Rameau] est singulier, brillant, composé, savant, trop savant quelquefois; mais c'est peut-être la faute de son auditeur."[80]

The sociology of the dispute between the supporters of Lully's and Rameau's musical styles was very similar to that of the dispute over French and Italian music at the beginning of the century. While on the side of Lully were most of the general public, some literary men, such as Fréron and Desfontaines, and the *Mercure de France*, on the side of Rameau were savants, many professional musicians, and connoisseurs of the Italian music, such as, the Abbé Mathieu, the curé de Saint-André-des-Arts, who had Italian religious compositions of Carissimi, Legrenzi, Stradella and others, performed since 1650; the financier Crozat and a rich *fermier général*, La Pouplinière, the patron of many musicians, including Rameau himself.[81] Diderot summarized both parties involved in the dispute in the following way: "les ignorants et les barbons tenaient tous pour Utmiutsol [Lully]; la jeunesse et les virtuoses étaient pour Utremifasolasiututut [Rameau]; et les gens de goût, tant jeunes que barbons, faisaient grand cas de tous les deux."[82] The supporters of Rameau were likely to represent a higher level of musical knowledge and accomplishments. The Abbé de Mably wrote in 1741 that where there is a *ramiste* among amateurs who gather to make music together, he is as a rule the spirit of such concerts, as he usually represents superior musical culture.[83] According to Abbé Pluche, only grands seigneurs and persons from the grand monde had enough leisure time to learn to perform Italian music; operatic arias were no longer accessible to the "bourgeoisie." For Pluche, authors such as Virgil, Boileau-Despréaux, Racine and Molière were "bourgeois" who wrote for the general audience; in music, Lully was such a composer. In contrast, Rameau did not bother to write for the general public (called "bourgeois" by Pluche) but for the savants and connoisseurs, that is, for those who knew the rules.[84]

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[79] *Ibid.*

[80] Denis Diderot, *Les Bijoux indiscrets* (1748) in *Ecrits sur la musique*, ed. by Béatrice Durand-Sendrail (Paris: Jean-Claude Lattès, 1987), p. 66. Although Diderot did not clearly take any part in the dispute, his sympathy was on Rameau's side. See also Béatrice Didier, *La musique des Lumières* (Paris: PUF, Ecriture, 1985), p. 184.

[81] See: Massson, "Musique italienne et musique française," pp. 544-545 and Prunières, "Lecerf de la Viéville et l'esthétique musicale classique au XVIIe siècle," pp. 620-621.

[82] Diderot, *Les Bijoux indiscrets*, Chapter XII, in *Ecrits sur la musique*, pp. 66-68.

Thus, in the eyes of his contemporaries, Rameau's operas were addressed to a limited audience. De Boissy wrote that *Hippolyte et Aricie* was written for "quinze ou vingt prétendus savants" and its music "ennuie à mourir plus de mille ignorants."[85] Among these "ignorants" were women. Abbé de Mably in the *Lettres à Madame la marquise de P *** sur l'opéra* (1741) described a scene in a salon where a Mme de S. declared her aversion to the Rameau's operas: "Je les déteste, c'est un vacarme affreux, ce n'est que le bruit, on en est étourdi. Toutes les voix sont couvertes par l'orchestre; et comment veut-on que je ne m'ennuye pas à un opéra dont je ne puis entendre un seul mot."[86]

The objections to Rameau's operas were those of polite society to a phenomenon which they perceived as violating, both aesthetically and socially, the rules of honnêteté. The story of the cooperation between Rameau and Voltaire on the opera *Samson* provides support for such a contention. Voltaire was fascinated by the operatic genre and considered writing a drama that would make a compromise between the French and the Italian operatic styles possible.[87] Very much in this spirit, he declared his neutrality in the Lully-Rameau dispute in a letter of 23 December of 1737 to Formont:

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[83] [Gabriel Bonnot de Mably], *Lettre à Mme la marquise de P . . . sur l'opéra* (Paris: Didot, 1741), pp. 144-145.

[84] Abbé Pluche, *Le spectacle de la nature, ou Entretiens sur les particularités de l'histoire naturelle . . .*, 8 vols. (Paris: Estienne, 1732-1750), VII, pp. 126-127.

[85] Louis de Boissy, *Le Badinage* (Paris: N.B. Duchesne, 1979), scene IX, p. 48.

[86] [Abbé de Mably], *Lettre à Madame la marquise de P. sur l'opéra*, quatrième lettre, p. 152.

[87] Catherine Kintzler writes that Voltaire represented a compromise between the

> Les esprits sont à Paris dans une petite guerre civile; les jansénistes attaquent les jésuites, les cassinistes s'élèvent contre Maupertuis, et ne veulent pas que la terre soit plate aux pôles. Il faudrait les y envoyer pour leur peine. Les lullistes appellent les partisans de Rameau les ramoneurs. Pour moi, sans parti, sans intrigue, retiré dans le paradis terrestre de Cirey, je suis si peu attaché à tout ce qui se passe à Paris que je ne regrette pas même la diablerie de Rameau, ou les beaux airs de Persée.[88]

While assuring Rameau in letters of his enthusiasm for cooperation and admiration for his musical genius, Voltaire never made the cooperation a success, primarily because he shared the objections of polite society to Rameau's music and found these two ultimately irreconciliable. Right after the premiere of Rameau's first opera, *Hippolyte et Aricie* in October 1733, Voltaire testified to the skepticism of polite society about the opera:

> J'assistay hier à la première représentation de l'opéra d'Aricie et d'Hipolite. Les paroles sont de l'abbé Pellegrin, et dignes de l'abbé Pellegrin. La musique est d'un nommé Ramau [*sic*], homme qui a le malheur de savoir plus de musique que Lully. C'est un pédant en musique. Il est exact, et ennuyeux.[89]

Later that year Voltaire responded to Rameau's enquiry about the work on the libretto, *Samson*, which he had agreed to write. Voltaire first emphasized that it was only for Rameau's reputation and advantage that he had undertaken the task[90] and expressed his fear that their cooperation would have to be treated with circumspection:

> Votre musique est admirable, mais cela même vous fait des enemis, et des enemis cruels. Je devrais en avoir moins que vous à proportion des talents. Cependant les miens ont poussé la calomnie jusqu'à dire qu'il y a des impiétés dans Samson. J'aurai de plus à essuyer les préjugés du public. . .Je n'ai point du tout à ce que je crois le talent des verses lyriques, c'est une harmonie particulière que j'ai peur de n'avoir point saisie. Je suis surtout incapable de faire un prologue passable. . .[91]

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classical vision of the opera and the aesthetic represented by Rameau. *Jean-Philippe Rameau.*

*Splendeur et naufrage de l'esthétique du plaisir à l'âge classique*, p. 118.

[88] Voltaire to Formont, 23 December of 1737, *Correspondance de Voltaire*, I, p. 966.

[89] Voltaire to M. de Ciderville, 2 octobre, 1733, *Ibid.*, I, p. 427.

[90] ". . . je n'ai travaillé au poème Samson que pour votre réputation et votre avantage . . ." *Ibid.*, I, p. 446.

[91] *Ibid.*

Voltaire's circumspection as to the reputation of Rameau was shared by other authors and he was still viewed by some as a composer whose reputation needed to be established. "Nous ne parlons pas d'un nouveau musicien qui semble partager tout Paris"—wrote Père André after the premiere of Rameau's opera *Dardanus* (1739). "Nous laissons mûrir sa réputation, d'autant plus que les principes qui lui sont propres ne sont pas encore assez bien établis, pour la mettre hors d'atteinte des révolutions de la fortune."[92]

After the premiere of Rameau's *Indes galantes* in August 1735 Voltaire wrote to Thieriot that in the course of time the general public in France would appreciate Rameau's operas; however, it would take three or four generations to change the predominant taste. Right now, he wrote, "the profusion of semi-quavers [in Rameau's operas] may make the lullists revolt."[93] And this was precisely what Voltaire wanted to avoid. At the beginning of 1736 he resumed his work on *Samson* but suggested that Rameau mitigate his Italian taste and try to reconcile it with the French one. In the end, the opera *Samson* by Voltaire-Rameau never materialized. After the unsuccessful attempt with *Samson*, Voltaire wrote another libretto, *Pandore*, but was reluctant to submit it to Rameau because he feared that "the savant Rameau sometimes neglects the recitative."[94] Ironically, the only really successful cooperation of the Voltaire-Rameau team was the divertissement, *La princesse de Navarre*, commissioned by the king and staged first in Versailles in February 1745 on the occasion of the marriage of the dauphin.

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[92] Yves-Marie André, "Essai sur le beau," in *Oeuvres philosophiques du Père André de la Compagnie de Jésus, avec une introduction sur sa vie et ses ouvrages tirée de sa correspondance inédite par Victor Cousin* (Paris: Charpentier [1741]), p. 234.

[93] "On dit que dans les Indes l'opéra de Ramau [*sic*] pouroit réussir. Je crois que la profusion de ses doubles croches peut révolter les lullistes. Mais à la longue il faudra bien que le gout de Ramau devienne le goust dominant de la nation, à mesure qu'elle sera plus savante. Les oreilles se forment petit à petit. Trois ou quatre générations changent les organes d'une nation. Lully nous a donné le sens de l'ouie que nous n'avions point. Mais les Ramaux le perfectioneront." Voltaire to Thieriot, 11 September, 1735, *Correspondance de Voltaire*, I, p. 575.

[94] " A l'égard de Pandora je m'imagine que cet opéra prêterait assez aux musiciens mai je ne sais à qui le donner. Il me semble que le récitatif en fait la principale partie, et que le savant Rameau néglige quelquefois le récitatif." Voltaire to Claude Adrien Helvétius, 24 [March, 1740], *Ibid.*, X, p. 72.

The success of a *pièce de circonstance*, such as *La princesse de Navarre*, was rather poor compensation for Voltaire for the frustration and disappointment in his attempts at becoming a worthy successor of the great librettists of Lully, Quinault and Racine. Just as Rameau would not give up his "savant" ways, Voltaire would not break with the operatic tradition initiated by Lully and with the standards of taste represented by polite society. In the eyes of Voltaire, it was ultimately Rameau and his wrong premises which made not only cooperation unsuccessful, but which also made his own operas a failure.

> Le malheur de Rameau [wrote Voltaire] est d'être un sot gouverné par de faux connaisseurs. Voylà pour quoy, il n'a jamais fait, et ne fera jamais un bon opéra. Tous ses ouvrages sont inégaux parce qu'il est impossible que le génie se plie toujours heureusement à de mauvaises paroles, mais celuy cy n'est point inégal, et le total compose le plus détestable spectacle que j'aye jamais vu, et entendu.[95]

In fact, Rameau approached Lully's operatic style much closer than Voltaire was ready to admit. It became a matter of course for the general audience just a couple of years later, during the Querelle des Bouffons, when Rameau was unanimously accepted as a representative of the truly French operatic style. An historian of the Lully-Rameau dispute writes that towards the end of the 1740s the attacks on Rameau's music became less intense and that the years 1751-1752 marked the triumph of Rameau with the public and the end of the dispute.[96] But the author fails to notice that such a change in orientation was possible not because the French public became more tolerant of "italianisms" in music (as will become evident in the Querelle des Bouffons) but precisely because Rameau (like the whole dispute over the French and the Italian opera) was never judged by exclusively aesthetic criteria. Rameau made his way back to the Parisian operatic stage in 1745 through a divertissement commissioned by the king and meant to entertain the court (*La princesse de Navarre*), not through an opera bristling with "italianisms. "This explains the change of tenor in the reviews in the official *Mercure de France* writing after the premiere of *La princesse* about a celebrated composer, recognized not only in France but also in Europe. Moreover, Rameau's pieces staged during the years 1748-1749, too, did not provoke much opposition for the same reason.[97] His former adversary, Elie Fréron, found it appropriate to clarify his own position in 1749:

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[95] Voltaire to Mme Denis, April 1745, *Ibid.*, II, p. 844.

[96] Paul-Marie Masson, "Lullistes et Ramistes, 1733-1752," *L'Année Musicale* (1911; Genève: Minkoff Reprints, 1972), p. 200.

> On l'accuse de travailler dans le goût italien; c'est-à-dire, qu'on lui fait un crime de ce qui mérite notre admiration. . . .La musique de M. Rameau n'est ni purement française, ni purement italienne. Il a graces et la douceur de l'une, sans en avoir la monotonnie; la profondeur et la gênie de l'autre sans trop sentir la science.[98]

Although criticism of Rameau did not completely cease, he became recognized by the musical and political establishment. It was all the more logical to acclaim Rameau a champion of French music, very much to his own satisfaction, in the Querelle des Bouffons. Marmontel noted in his "Essai sur les révolutions de la musique en France" that it was precisely to fight the "foreign invasion" (that of Italian music) that the opponents of Rameau gave up their case and embraced him as a powerful ally.[99]

### The Querelle des Bouffons, 1752-1754[100]

The dispute over French and Italian opera took on a new course from the beginning of 1752. In February of that year, Frederick Melchior Grimm published the "Lettre sur Omphale," a violent attack on French operatic music, in response to the 1751 tragédie lyrique in the Lully style, *Omphale*, successfully staged in Paris in January 1752.[101] The "Lettre" inspired a couple of responses arguing in favour of either music,[102] and probably would not have developed further if not for the arrival of an Italian *opera buffa* troupe in Paris on August 1 of 1752. The troupe performed their light-hearted pieces either before full-length tragédie lyriques or between their acts, making the contrast between the French and the Italian operatic styles all the more striking.

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[97] Among Rameau's operas staged during that time were: *Talents lyriques*, *Zais*, *Les Fêtes de l'Amour et de l'Hymen*, *Pygmalion*, *Platée*, and *Nais*. *Mercure de France*, May 1749.

[98] Elie Fréron (ed.), *Lettres sur quelques écrits de ce temps*, 13 vols. (Paris, 1749-1754; 2 vols. Genève: Slatkine, 1966), II (1749), pp. 246-147.

[99] "Essay sur les révolutions de la musique en France," in *Oeuvres complètes de Marmontel*, 7 vols. (Paris: A. Belin, 1829), VII, p. 106.

[100] A versionf this section has been published. Jolanta T. Pekacz, "Gender as a Political Orientation: Parisian *Salonnières* and the *Querelle des Bouffons*," *Canadian Journal of History/Annales Canadiennes d'Histoire* 32 (December 1997), pp. 405–414.

[101] Frederick Melchior Grimm, *Correspondance littéraire litteraire, philosophique et critiqu*,. ed. by Maurice Tourneux, 16 vols. (Paris: Garnier, 1877–1882), XVI, p. 289. Music to the *Omphale* was written by André-Cardinal Destouches and the libretto by Houdar de La Motte.

The quarrel between the proponents of French and Italian operatic styles burst out in a moment of a serious constitutional crisis over Jansenism and the rights of the Parlement in Paris. However, if Grimm is to be believed, the quarrel soon forced even political topics into the background.[103] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, too, reported that

> Tout Paris se divisa en deux partis plus échauffés que s'il se fut agi d'une affaire d'Etat ou de Religion. L'un plus puissant plus nombreux, composé des Grands, des riches et des femmes, soutenoit la musique françoise; l'autre plus vif, plus fier, plus enthousiaste, étoit composé des vrais connoisseurs, des gens à talens, des hommes de genie.[104]

Among "real connoisseurs, persons of talent and men of genius" Rousseau counted primarily the philosophes—including d'Alembert, d'Holbach, Grimm, Diderot, Turgot and himself—who were unanimous in their support for the Italian operatic style. In his *Mémoires* published after the French Revolution, Marmontel confirmed that "les Diderot, les d'Alembert, les Bouffon, les Turgot, les d'Holbach, les Helvétius, les Rousseau, tous brûlants de zèle pour la musique italienne."[105] Other authors confirmed this opinion.[106] In his

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[102] See Louisette Reichenburg, *Contribution à l'histoire de la "Querelle des Bouffons," guerre de brochures suscitées par le 'Petit prophète' de Grimm et par la 'Lettre sur la musique françoise' de Rousseau* (Philadelphia, 1937; New York: AMS Press, 1978), pp. 23-26.

[103] "Les acteurs italiens qui jouent depuis dix mois sur le théâtre de l'Opéra à Paris, et qu'on nomme ici bouffons, ont tellement absorbé l'attention de Paris que le Parlement. . ." Grimm, *Correspondance littéraire*, II, 1 July, 1753, p. 259.

[104] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Les confessions*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, 5 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1959-1995), I, p. 384.

[105] Jean François Marmontel, *Mémoires*, 2 vols., ed. by John Renwick (Clermont-Ferrand: G. de Bussac, 1972), p. 119.

[106] For example, a visitor to France wrote: ". . . though I had the pleasure of hearing her [Diderot's daughter] for several hours, not a single French composition was played by her the whole time, all was Italian and German; hence it will not be difficult to form a judgement of M. Diderot's taste in music." Charles Burney, *An Eighteenth-century Musical Tour in France and Italy*, ed. by Percy A. Scholes (London: Oxford University

*Polymnie* (Chant IV), Marmontel admitted in retrospect that, although in an inconspicuous way, he, too, took a pro-Italian stance in the Querelle des Bouffons: "J'étais du nombre et je parle en soldat/ Soldat obscur, mais présent au combat. "Jacques Cazotte echoed Rousseau in his pamphlet of 1753, writing that not only did the philosophes support the Italian opera, but also "les Connoisseurs se déclarent pour elle."[107] In addition to declarations, many of the philosophes took an active part in the quarrel by issuing pamphlets against the partisans of the opposite camp. Grimm, for example, was the author of a biting satire in the midst of the Querelle, in which he described the state of decadence of the French musical stage.[108]

The most violent attack, however, was launched by Rousseau in his *Lettre sur la musique françoise* published in 1753.[109] Rousseau claimed that the French language, with its poor prosody and lack of open vowels, is incapable of producing either good rhythm or good melody, good airs or good recitatives.[110] As a result, French music has neither measure nor melody, the language being capable of neither; French singing is but a continuous barking, its harmony is crude, French airs are no airs, French recitatives are no recitatives, therefore the French do not and cannot have music. As opposed to the French, Italian music—according to Rousseau—had a simple and pure harmony, lively and brilliant accompaniments, a well-defined measure and rhythm, a highly varied and expressive melody.

Both parties involved in the quarrel gathered in the opposite corners of the Opéra's hall: the partisans of French opera occupied a place under the king's box (*coin du roi*), and the supporters of the Italian under the queen's box (*coin de la reine*). In innumerable

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Press, 1959), p. 317.

[107] [Jacques Cazotte], *Lettre écrite à une Dame en Province. Par quelqu'un qui n'est ni d'un Coin ni de l'autre* (n.p., 1752 [*sic*: 1753]). Among such "connoisseurs" was La Pouplinière.

[108] *Le petit prophète de Boemischbroda, le correcteur des bouffons et la guerre de l'Opéra* (Paris, 1753); English trans. in Oliver Strunk, ed., *Source Reading in Music History* (New York: Norton, 1950).

[109] D'Alembert maintained that Rousseau made more enemies for himself and for the *Encyclopédie* by his *Lettre sur la musique françoise* than by anything he had ever written before. See d'Alembert's essay "De la Liberté de la Musique," in *Oeuvres de D'Alembert*, 5 vols. (Paris: A. Belin, 1821-1822), I, partie 1, pp. 515-546.

[110] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Lettre sur la musique françoise*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, V, pp. 291-328.

publications that appeared on the quarrel these two locations became identification labels for each camp. Whereas the "queen's corner," as Grimm put it, assembled "les philosophes et les beaux esprits, et les élus de la nation jusqu'à ce jour; et les réprouvés n'y entrent point, car ils en sont exclus,"[111] the "king's corner" gathered less illustrious individuals, such as Elie Fréron, a literary man; Jacques Cazotte, a commissioner of naval administration; Pidansat de Mairobert, a royal censor and secretary of command [secrétaire des commandements] of the Duc de Chartres; Charles-Pierre Coste d'Arnobat, a man of letters and a *gendarme de la maison du roi*; authors François-Louis-Claude Marin, Louis-Bertrand Castel, Caux de Cappeval, and Fusée de Voisenon; Blainville, a cellist and professor of music; and the Abbé Arnaud, a literary man and a future ardent supporter of Gluck in the musical quarrel in the 1770s. Among composers, Rameau occupied the post of honour in the pro-French camp. While in the 1730s and the 1740s Rameau's operas were considered the epitome of the Italian musical idiom, in the Querelle des Bouffons he was attacked by the partisans of Italian opera as a representative of French music par excellence.

Although the pro-French party gathered less prominent intellectual and literary figures, it enjoyed the most powerful support: that of the king himself and of Mme de Pompadour. Just as Lecerf de la Viéville in his dispute with Abbé Raguenet was using the king's authority to win his case in favour of the French taste, the pro-French pamphleteers in the Querelle des Bouffons were arguing along the same lines, placing the dispute on a political as well as an aesthetic plane, as I will discuss later in this section.

The general public, too, was on the side of French opera. According to Rousseau, among its supporters were "the great, the wealthy and the ladies"; the latter suggesting the salon women too. In his *Lettre sur la musique françoise* Rousseau testified even more explicitly that women took pleasure in the French rather than the Italian opera: "C'est sur ces impertinens amphigouris [French arias] que nos Musiciens épuisent leur goût et leur sçavoir, et nos Acteurs leurs gestes et leurs poumons; c'est à ces morceaux extravagans que nos femmes se pâment d'admiration . . ."[112] Comte Francesco Algarotti in his *Newtonianisme des Dames* (1739) also testified to the preference of Parisian women for French music and attributed it to its simplicity and ability to touch the heart."[113] Elie Fréron noticed in his ironic comment about Pergolesi's *La serva padrona* that "whenever the *bouffons* have performed, there have been only one or two geometricians, lawyers and publicists [in the audience], and almost no women."[114] Fréron also appealed to the old argument of the superiority of women's judgement in matters of taste to make his point against the Italian opera: ". . . par la délicatesse et la sensibilité qui leur est naturelle . . . [elles] ne sont point touchées par la musique italienne."[115] Grimm attributed the anti-Italian stance of women to their lack of knowledge of the Italian language. The ladies, he wrote, "ont dit beaucoup de mal de la Musique Italienne. . . . parce qu'elles n'entendaient pas la langue des Pétrarque, des Tasse, des Arioste, des Métastase . . ."[116] D'Holbach, on his part, attributed to the dispute over French and Italian music a chauvinist perspective and argued that "[les femmes] veulent être regardées, et ne goûteront jamais une musique que les hommes écoutent."[117]

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[111] Grimm, *Le Petit Prophète* in Denise Launay, *La querelle des Bouffons . Textes et pamphlets*. 3 vols. Genève: Minkoff Reprint, 1973, I, pp. 157-157.

These accounts, explicit as they are, refer to "women" in general and none of them comments upon a specific lady; "women" are, like the "philosophes" or "beaux esprits," a collective category whose content was a matter of course for contemporaries and the differences that might exist within it did not really matter.[118] But unlike the philosophes,

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[112] Rousseau, *Lettre sur la musique françoise*, in *Oeuvres complétes*, V, p. 316.

[113] "J'aime mieux, dit la Marquise, la Musique Française que la Musique Italienne, parce que, avec des Notes simples & unies, elle touche le coeur, & met les passions en mouvement; au lieu que l'Italienne, *avec ses tons découpés*, les fugues, les tremblemens continuels & tout son art nous // laisse la plupart du tems dans une tranquillité pleine d'esprit." M. Algaroti, *Newtonianisme des Dames*, p. 75, as quoted by [De Morand et Estève], *Justification de la musique françoise contre la querelle qui lui a été faite par un Allemand et un Allobroge*, pp. 9-10. Launay, *La querelle des Bouffons*, II, pp. XLIV/1097-1098.

[114] Elie Fréron, *Lettres sur la musique française* (Geneva, 1754), pp. 7-8, as quoted by William Weber, "Learned and General Musical Taste in Eighteenth-Century France", *Past and Present*, 89 (November, 1980), p. 69.

[115] As quoted by Reichenburg, *Contribution à l'histoire de la 'Querelle des bouffons'*, p. 43.

[116] Grimm, *Correspondance littéraire*, II, p. 408.

[117] [D'Holbach], *Lettre à une dame d'un certain âge sur l'état présent de l'opéra* (Paris, 1752), p. 9; Launay, *La querelle des Bouffons*, I, p. V/129.

[118] Interestingly, there are no accounts alluding to women as supporters of the French opera. Given the charged atmosphere of the *Querelle des Bouffons*, if women were supporting the Italian opera, this would very likely have been reported.

whose individual views can be reconstructed from their writings, women's views on the quarrel were rarely that explicitly stated and for the most part can be inferred from the collective category of "women." From among the famous salonnières of the time, Mme Geoffrin's views on the Querelle are unknown;[119] Mlle de Lespinasse arrived in Paris only in the spring of 1754 to begin her apprenticeship in Mme du Deffand's salon; neither Mme du Deffand nor Mme de Graffigny, whose musical tastes were located well in the past,[120] dwell much on the Querelle in their correspondence.

And yet, there is no doubt as to the stance of the salonnières precisely because there was no option for them. The choice between the French and the Italian opera was not merely a matter of an aesthetic preference but of a much more general orientation involving political, social and moral questions as well. D'Alembert's circumspection in revealing his pro-Italian sympathies in contacts with Mme du Deffand provides an interesting case as it tells us more about the views of Mme du Deffand than about those of d'Alembert. There is little doubt about d'Alembert's preference for the Italian opera as early as the eve of the quarrel.[121] Nonetheless, in his letter to Mme du Deffand of 22 December 1952, he found it appropriate to refute the opinion that he was at the head of the pro-Italian faction and to declare that he did not have any exclusive taste and that he would always approve of what was pleasing in French music.[122] In a letter of 17 January 1753 to Mme du Deffand, d'Alembert denied taking any part in the writing of Grimm's pro-Italian pamphlet *Le Petit Prophète*. Some weeks later, he appeared equally concerned about keeping his allegedly neutral position in the Querelle and boasted in a letter to Mme du Deffand that he had made a lot of enemies by what he had said about Italian music.

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[119] Her views on music, however, fit into what Lecerf de la Viéville considered a perfect incarnation of French musical tradition, with the prominent place of vocal music and the secondary status of instrumental. As noted by her biographer, ". . . le chant, par une exception unique, trouvait grâce à ses yeux, mais à la condition que la voix fut seule et sans accompagnement, car elle détestait tous les instruments, déclarant que 'l'assemblage de plusieurs faisait beaucoup de bruit, et qu'un seul était insipide." Marquis de Ségur, *Le royaume de la rue Saint-Honoré* (Paris: Calmann-Lévy, 1925), p. 8.

[120] See the correspondence of both; Sainte-Beuve considered Mme du Deffand a "true classicist."

[121] See, for example, the diary of police inspector d'Hémery containing the following passage under 1753: "He [d'Alembert] has a great deal of vanity and presumption and is closely associated with Diderot and Rousseau from Geneva. They are all three lovers of Italian music, and are three somewhat fanatical beings." *Journal de l'Inspecteur d'Hémery*, pp. 117-118; as quoted by Craveri, *Madame du Deffand and Her World*, transl. from the Italian and the French by Teresa Waugh (Boston: David R. Godine, 1994) p. 93. See also Robert M. Isherwood, "The Conciliatory Partisan: Jean Le Rond d'Alembert," *French Musical Thought, 1600-1800*, ed. by Georgia Cowart (Ann Arbor/London: UMI Research Press 1989), p. 100.

> The outburst against me and my work is prodigious. . . . But you would be surprised to know that it is not so much my criticism of the great as my praise for Italian music which has made me such a bunch of enemies. I thought one could love everything including puppets without hurting anyone; but I was mistaken. A powerful and formidable group led by Monsieur Jélyotte and the Président Hénault goes from house to house baying for my blood. You can imagine the effects that has had on me and how much I would need my stoicism at this time if I did not deem it necessary to preserve it for even more important occasions.[123]

In an undated letter to another salonnière, Mlle de Lespinasse, D'Alembert also declared his antipathy for Italian music and enclosed an anti-Italian satire, probably written by himself, which he called "a product of my old age and my antipathy for Italian music."[124] Rather than proving d'Alembert's views in the quarrel, however, both the letter and the verse suggests those of Mlle de Lespinasse, and d'Alembert's desire to please her. One scholar has argued that the letter was written long after the events of 1753 and did not reflect "d'Alembert's eclectic views and catholic taste in this period."[125]

D'Alembert's circumspection in expressing his views to Mme du Deffand as to the superiority of the Italian operatic style might have resulted from his reluctance to repudiate French opera on purely aesthetic grounds, as Robert Isherwood has argued.[126] But it may also be viewed as a result of his self-imposed diplomacy in relations with Mme du Deffand, as he needed her support on his way to the Académie Française. The pro-French views of the marquise du Deffand in the quarrel caught d'Alembert between two conflicting loyalties: to himself and to the philosophes on the one hand, and to the marquise, on the other.[127] Such an assumption is confirmed by d'Alembert's publications on the quarrel which appeared after 1754, that is, after he had been admitted to the Académie (with the prominent support of Mme du Deffand), especially his *Fragment sur l'opéra* and *De la liberté* (1759), both being explicit declarations of his pro-Italian stance.[128] The *Fragment* is especially interesting here: feeling free from any obligations to Mme du Deffand, d'Alembert sounds almost as if he wanted to make up for the period of enforced supression of his "freedom of speech" and announce his disappointment with French women as judges of music, despite their aspirations to judge "everything concerning taste."[129]

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[122] As quoted in Maurice Barthélemy, "Essai sur la position de d'Alembert dans la querelle des bouffons," *"Recherches" sur la musique française classique* 6 (1966), p. 162.

[123] A letter of 16 February, 1753, to Mme du Deffand; as quoted by Benedetta Craveri, *Madame du Deffand and Her World*, p. 127.

[124] See, Pappas, "D'Alembert et la Querelle des Bouffons," p. 482.

[125] Isherwood, "The Conciliatory Partisan," p. 118, n. 22.

Women's preference for French rather than Italian opera reflected their adherence to what was generally considered classic, orderly, honnête, and national; that is, what had been traditionally considered appropriate for a woman. During the Querelle des Bouffons, the perception of the major characteristics of French and Italian opera, from the pro-French point of view, had been the same from the beginning of the century: while the French was an incarnation of the classical ideal, simplicity and good taste; the Italian was bizzarre, disorderly and in bad taste. As one pamphleteer put it,

> . . . les Italiens ont une Musique un peau sauvage, saillante, efforée, libre, & presque libertine, capricieuse, licencieuse, supérieure aux regles & à nous par conséquant qui sommes peut-être la règle, le régulateur, le balancier, le

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[126] *Ibid.*

[127] A similar argument was advanced by Barthélemy, "Essai sur la position de d'Alembert dans la querelle des bouffons," pp. 160-161.

[128] In 1754 d'Alembert published anonymously *Fragment sur la musique en général et sur la nôtre en particulier*, which is also an unambiguous statement of his preference for the Italian musical style.

[129] D'Alembert, "Fragment sur l'opéra," *Oeuvres et Correspondance inédites de d'Alembert*, ed. by Charles Henry (Genève: Slatkine, 1967), pp. 155-164. D'Alembert's attitude to salons was purely pragmatic. In his *Essai sur la société des gens de lettres et des grands, sur la réputation, sur les mécènes, et sur les récompenses littéraires* (1752) he wrote about the debilitating influence of politeness and advocated the independence of writers from polite society. At the same time, however, d'Alembert maintained close contacts with Mme de Deffand. Shortly after having been elected to the Académie, he broke with Mme du Deffand, not in order to implement his views declared in the *Essay*, but to move to the salon of Mlle de Lespinasse.

> pendule de l'horloge dont ils sont le ressort, le poids, & nous le contre-poids.[130]

In contrast, French opera reflected

> Notre propre caractère plus doux, plus modéré, plus timoré, plus sage, plus régulier, plus soûtenu, plus terre à terre, en un mot plus vif qu'ardent, plus mobile qu'impétueux, nous tient dans un genre de médiocrité, de cette médiocrité toute d'or, qui fait après tout, la vraie, bonne belle Musique de commerce & de tous les jours.[131]

Another author pointed at the artificiality and superficiality of Italian music, whose sole purpose is to surprise rather than to please:

> [Italian music] ressemble aux feux d'artifice, qui éblouissent et qui n'éclairent pas, aux sauts de voltigeurs qui suprennent et qui n'amusent pas, aux tours de gobelets qui réjouissent et qui n'enchantent pas; qu'on y cherche en vain la noblesse, la grâce, le grand goût, qu'en un mot, elle cause plus d'étonnement que de plaisir . . .[132]

More than one author compared Italian opera to a poor conversation, violating the basic rules of an honnête discourse. Fusée de Voisenon, for example, wrote that "Un Opéra Italien isolé paroitra bien-tôt aussi insoutenable qu'un bavard impérieux qui usurpe la conversation, qui étonne d'abord, & qui finit par excéder."[133] Another pamphleteer echoed: "Leurs [Italian] Opéras sont composés de pieces de rapport. Ils ressemblent à une conversation animé de plusieurs personnes que seroient convenues de chanter successivement une Chanson après le récit qu'ils avoient à faire."[134]

Because of its simplicity and naturalness, French opera was accessible to both savants and ordinary people [*le peuple*]; Italian music, instead, was comprehensible only to savants. Thus, while the French opera was unifying, the Italian introduced divisions: ". . . les

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[130] [le P. Castel], *Lettres d'un academicien de Bordeaux sur le fonds de la musique. A l'occasion de la Lettre de M. R*** contre la Musique Françoise* (Paris, n.d.), Lettre VII, p. 56; Launay, *La querelle des Bouffons*, II, p. XLIX/1422.

[131] *Ibid.*, Lettre VIII, p. 65; Launay, *La querelle des Bouffons*, II, p. XLIX/1431.

[132] Marc-Antoine Laugier, *Apologie de la musique française* (1754), as quoted by Adolphe Jullien, *Musique et les philosophes au dix-huitième siècle* (Paris: J. Baur, 1873), p. 33.

[133] [Fusée de Voisenon?], *Reponse du Coin du Roi au Coin de la Reine* (Paris, 1753), p. 7; Launay, *La querelle des Bouffons*, I, p. IX/275.

[134] Marin, *Ce qu'on a dit ce qu'on a voulu dire. Lettre a Madame Folio*, Paris, 1752,

Savants sont d'un coté, & le Peuple de l'autre" wrote an anonymous author of a pamphlet in the midst of the querelle.[135]

Just as Lecerf de la Viéville did in his polemic with the Abbé Raguenet, during the Querelle des Bouffons both French and Italian music were often characterized through gender-charged metaphors referring to negative and positive connotations associated with a précieuse and an honnête woman respectively.

> La Musique Italienne est une coquette qui croit faire des mines [wrote an anonymous author in January 1753], & qui souvent ne fait que grimacer des mots. La Musique Françoise est une femme tendre qui peint des sentiments. J'accorde les Ariettes à la première; mais que l'on soit équitable; la Musique Italienne fournit de fort jolie hors-d'oeuvre; la Musique Françoise fait le fond du repas.[136]

In a similar vein, Blainville wrote in 1754 that Italian music "C'est un genre qui ne manque jamais de plaire, lorsqu'il est nourri, & ennobli des deux autres; c'est une jolie coquette toujours séduissante. "As opposed to Italian, French music was likened to "une femme naive & aimable."[137]

For the author of an anonymous brochure *Ce que l'on a dit. Lettre à madame Folio* (1753) French music was "une beauté mâle et régulière qui nous en impose par la fierté et par majesté" while Italian music reminded one of "une coquette rusée qui folâtre et qui nous charme par toutes ses gentillesses."[138] Thus, while both kinds of music are compared to women, the effect of the gendered metaphor was further reinforced by likening the French music to a "manly" woman, that is, a woman purified of frivolous feminine characteristics.

In his *Lettre d'un Sage à un homme très respectable* (1754) Rochette de la Morlière, refuting Rousseau's attack on French music, used a similar gendered allegory. The author

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p. 10; Launay, *La querelle des Bouffons*, I, p. XXIII/478.

[135] [Jourdan?], *Lettre critique et historique sur la musique Françoise, la Musique Italienne, & sur les Bouffons*, p. 4; Launay, *La querelle des Bouffons*, I, p. XXII/452.

[136] [Fusée de Voisenon?], *Reponse du Coin du Roi au Coin de la Reine*; Launay, *La querelle des Bouffons*, I, pp. IX/269-270.

[137] C. H. Blainville, *L'esprit d l'art musical ou reflexions sur la musique et ses différentes parties* (Genève, 1754; Genève: Minkoff Reprint, 1974), p. 11.

[138] As quoted by Reichenburg, *Contribution à l'histoire de la'Querelle des bouffons'*, p. 61.

makes Rousseau [Le Sage] criticize French music by comparing it to a disorderly hostess of a château:

> Sa démarche, ses mouvements, ses attitudes, ses gestes sont essentiellement faux, mal concertés, sans combinaison, sans règle et sans principe moteur, puisque l'harmonie qui les occasionne n'en est point une, mais une discordance perpétuelle; que l'instinct (car ce n'est que cela) qui bat, pour ainsi dire, la mesure dans son âme, la bat toujours à faux; que la tête prend presque toujours la partie de dessus, mais que son coeur ne se charge point de l'accompagnement . . .

> As opposed to the hostess, Italian music is depicted as a woman

> charmante en tout point, s'avance à la faveur des paradoxes, qu'elle réduit en principes; vive, coquette, sémillante, usagée, prétintaillée, dont les ajustemens et les pompons dépendent du caprice de ses adorateurs, n'ayant rien qui ne soit à ses amis, point d'essence particulière, point de beautés appropriées, point d'idée, que celle des autres, une glace qui réfléchit tous les objets, ne peignant rien par elle-même, et ou l'on trouve tout ce qu'on veut y apercevoir. Furieuse dans l'excès de la joie, brillante dans la douleur, grimacière dans la plaisanterie, minaudière dans le sentiment . . .[139]

The typical distribution of the characteristics of French and Italian music is retained here, despite the intended negative slant in the description of the "hostess of a château." Rochette de la Morlière ends the confrontation between the two types of women-music by asking a rhetorical question an answer to which is, in his opinion, a matter of course: which one would you choose?

In the eyes of the philosophes, it became a symbol of obscurantism to support French opera. Grimm wrote in *Le petit prophète* that the "queen's corner" was occupied by luminaries, philosophes, *beaux esprits* and the elect of the nation."[140] Rousseau, too, made it explicit that the supporters of the Italian opera included "des vrais connoisseurs, des gens á talens, des hommes de genie."[141] Thus, the elite of the French nation were supporting Italian opera. The were complex and not at all based on aesthetic considerations alone. The beginning of the Querelle des Bouffons coincided with the supression of the first two volumes of the *Encyclopédie* in February 1752 and the participation in the musical quarrel offered the philosophes a safer ground to argue their own case, than an overt confrontation with the establishment. By advocating liberty of music and of feeling (identified with the Italian opera), they advocated liberty of thinking and of speaking (identified with the *Encyclopédie*). This is precisely what d'Alembert explicitly stated in his essay *De la liberté de la musique* (1760):

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[139] *Ibid.*, pp. 86-87.

[140] Launay, *La querelle des Bouffons*, I, pp. 157-158.

[141] *Les confessions*, in *Oeuvres complètes*, I, p. 384.

> . . . toutes les libertés . . . sont également dangereuses. La liberté de la musique suppose celle de sentir; la liberté de sentir entraine celle de penser, la liberté de penser celle d'agir, et la liberté d'agir est la ruine des États. Conservons donc l'Opéra tel qu'il est, si nous avons envie de conserver le royaume, et mettons un frein à la licence de chanter, si nous ne voulons pas que celle de parler la suive bientôt.[142]

At the same time, however, the philosophes did not support Rousseau in his 1753 essay attacking French music since it not only would shift the discussion on opera to aesthetic grounds (in which the philosophes were not interested) but, more importantly, it could harm their project of the *Encyclopédie*. As William Weber has indicated, this suggests that the philosophes' participation in the Querelle was motivated by extra-musical reasons.[143]

Whether motivated by musical or non-musical reasons, by taking the pro-Italian stance, the philosophes saw themselves as acting in the best interest of their nation. But this was not the way things were viewed by the pro-French party. The philosophes were for them not the "elite" of the nation but the usurpers. They abused the tolerance of the government promoting all kinds of liberties, their views were not progressive but merely stirred disorder, and they did not act in the nation's best interest. The defenders of French opera put their arguments in clearly political terms: the choice between the French or the Italian opera was indicative of a pro- and anti-French option, especially after Rousseau's *Lettre sur la musique françoise*, published in November 1753. Caux de Cappeval made it explicit in the "Discours Apologétique" to his *Apologie du goût françois relativement à l'opéra* that he entered the quarrel on the French side as a part of his civic duties to defend his fatherland.

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[142] D'Alembert, "De la liberté de la musique," in *Oeuvres de D'Alembert*, I, p. 520.

[143] See: Weber, "Learned and General Musical Taste," p. 79. One could go even further to confirm this standpoint and notice that in the 1770s the same philosophes would not participate in the dispute between the Gluckists and the Piccinists. In a similar vein, Robert M. Isherwood argued that it was a struggle between the Opéra (*Académie Royale de Musique*), an institution deeply anchored in the old regime, supported by the crown and catering to the taste of aristocracy; and the Opéra-comique, an institution of popular origins, infused with the music of Italian opera buffa. Thus, by supporting the Italian opera, the philosophes discredited the government and the musical genre it patronized." By attacking the French opera, they attacked the old regime it sybmolized. See Isherwood, "The Third War of the Musical Enlightenment," in: *Studies in Eighteenth-Century Culture*, vol. 4, ed. by Harold E. Pagliaro (Madison-Wiscontin: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1975), p. 225.

> . . . je n'entre dans la querelle que pour ma part de Citoyen. Voilà la source unique, & tout le soutien de mon zéle: quel en est l'objet?La patrie. Etre Philosophe, Musicien, Poëte même, c'est peu de chose. Etre Citoyen, c'est beaucoup; & ce title seul dit tout le reste: mais sans lui tout le reste ne dit rien.[144]

Although Caux de Cappeval raises some aesthetic issues in his "Discours" and compares French and Italian musical styles, the quarrel has for him primarily an extra-musical character. The philosophes who publish against French music as "would-bes" [*prétendus*] are to be taken with circumspection, as "Le manteau de la Philosophie couvre souvent bien des vices, quoiqu'il ne soit fait que pour servir d'enseigne aux ridicules."[145] By ridiculing national music in their *libelles extravagans*, the philosophes destroy the most beautiful part of the pleasures of the French people, that is, national music.[146] They attack French taste, the superiority of which was acknowledged all over Europe. In addition, the philosophes offend the public by throwing at it all the impertinences that come to their mind.[147]

Further, Caux de Cappeval presents the philosophes as despots who, through their vicious attacks on French music, want to uproot it in favour of just one type, the Italian, that would finally triumph in all of Europe, like one religion with its headquarters in Rome.[148] The author compares the whole dispute to a civil war (declared by Grimm in his *Lettre sur Omphale*) in which the pamphlets are "light troops" [*troupes légères*] and the main pamphleteers on the pro-Italian sides a foreign element, as opposed to the truly French supporting their music. Grimm is referred to as *l'Allemand* and Rousseau as *Genevois*. To resist Italian music is for Caux de Cappeval the same as to resist an invasion of foreign troops: the Querelle des Bouffons is an hour of trial for the nation and a matter of national mobilization. And just as the nation mobilizes itself to fight a foreign invasion, so should the French nation mobilize itself to fight Italian music.

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[144] N. de Caux de Cappeval, *Apologie du goût français relativement à l'opéra. Poème avec un Discours Apologetique & des Adieux aux Bouffons* (Paris, n.d.), pp. 7-8; Launay, *La querelle des Bouffons*, II, pp. LIII/1557.

[145] *Ibid.*, p. 8.

[146] *Ibid.*, pp. 2-3.

[147] *Ibid.*, p. 11.

[148] *Ibid.*, p. 12.

Caux de Cappeval was not the only author who presented the Querelle des Bouffons as a war stirred by "foreign" elements; on the one hand, by foreign nationals who had no right to instruct the French on what was good for them and, on the other, by those who had no such right because they were not seen as belonging to those entitled to judge. This is what Jacques Cazotte had in mind when he wrote in 1753 that

> Un *Allemand* [Grimm] avoit imaginé que nos Danseurs executoient de mauvaise grace, que notre Chant ne rendoit point l'expression de notre Langue. Et trois *Géomètres* [Diderot, Rousseau and most likely d'Holbach] avoient calculé que le tout joint ensamble ne pouvoit pas faire une somme complette de plaisir. [149]

An author (Voisenon?) of another anonymous pamphlet of 1753, *Réponse du coin du Roi au coin de la reine*, also referred to the *Allemands* (Grimm and d'Holbach) and the *Géomètres* (D'Alembert and Diderot) as the main supporters of the Italian opera, and still another wrote to "Messieurs les Allemands" and "Messieurs les Suisses" that French music was superior for the French people precisely because it was French and no foreigner should attempt to change it.[150]

Similarly, presenting the attacks on French opera as attacks on the French nation and the defence of the French opera as a matter of patriotic duty was a common line of reasoning found in pro-French pamphlets. Caux de Cappeval wrote that "Jamais ils [les philosophes] n'ont injurié la France avec tant de force & de courage . . ."[151] An anonymous author of *Lettre critique et historique sur la musique françoise, la musique italienne, et sur les*

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[149] Cazotte, *La guerre de l'opéra*, in Launay, *La querelle des Bouffons*, p. 108.

[150] "Quoiqu'il en soit, Messieurs les Allemands & Messieurs les Suisses, vous ne parviendrez point à nous dépouillier de nostre Musique vocale, *que nous aimons parce que c'est la nôtre*, & qu'une autre Musique ne seroit que grimacer sur nos paroles; . . ." [Jourdan], *Le Correcteur des Bouffons à l'Ecolier de Prague* (Paris, n.d.), p. 18, in Launay, *La querelle des Bouffons*, I, pp. VII/210.

[151] *Apologie du goût françois*, p. 9.

*Bouffons; à Madame D**** (1753) saw the attacks on French music and the taste for Italian as "d'injure à l'honneur de la France."[152] Elie Fréron, too, considered taking a pro-French stance a matter of patriotic duty: "Soyez bien persuadé que ce n'est pas par animosité que je reviens contre Jean-Jacques. J'aime ma nation; je crois défendre le bon goût . . ."[153]

In the eyes of their opponents, the form of the discourse of the pro-Italian party, too, was far from an honnête discourse. Caux de Cappeval wrote that Grimm's *Lettre sur Omphale*, which initiated the quarrel, was written with a *Germanique élégance*. Soon, however, to fight more effectively, the Germanic tone was abandoned, especially its prolixity, and the war took on the tone of chicane: the pro-Italian party used all kinds of dishonest means in the battle, including false citations, made-up stories and impudent lies, in addition to logical contradictions, and ostentatious displays of false expertise [*faux étalage de science*].[154] Rousseau, in particular, was guilty of pedantry in picking out the slightest imperfections in French music, without noticing serious flaws in the Italian.[155] These were the methods used by the philosophes and savants, according to Caux de Cappeval, the result of folly and extravagance, not real wisdom and prudence; ". . . plaisante façon de juger du goût & de la musique."[156]

### Gluckists contra Piccinists, 1773-1779

Although the *Querelle des Bouffons* ended in a "victory" for the adherents of French opera (the Italian troupe was expelled on the king's order in 1754 and the traditional French repertoire restored in the Opéra), the aesthetic, social and political issues underlying the earlier quarrels remained open. They resurfaced twenty years later, with the arrival in Paris in 1773 of Christoph Willibald Gluck, a German composer with an established reputation in the operatic genre. Aesthetically, Gluck proposed reforms of the French lyric theatre very much in the spirit of the French operatic tradition initiated by Lully, with its most important principle rooted in the classical doctrine and assuming the subordination of the music to the operatic text.[157] Moreover, having been invited and supported by royalty, he was perceived as representing the establishment, the ancien regime, as Marmontel noted in his *Mémoires*. "Dans ce temps-là même [wrote Marmontel] étoit arrivé d'Allemagne le musicien Gluck, aussi fortement recommandé à la jeune reine par l'empereur Joseph son frère, que si le succès de la musique allemande avoit eu l'importance d'une affaire d'Etat . . ."[158] To ensure the success of Gluck's first opera staged in Paris, *Iphigénie en Aulide*, became a political matter. In a letter of 22 March 1774 the comte Merey-Argenteau wrote to Chancellor Kaunitz:

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[152] As quoted by Reichenburg, *Contribution à l'histoire de la'Querelle des bouffons'*, p. 59.

[153] *Ibid.*, p. 93.

[154] Caux de Cappeval, *Apologie du goût françois*, pp. 8-9 and 11; see also "Chant cinquième," *Ibid.*, p. 61.

[155] *Ibid.*, p. 13.

[156] *Ibid.*, p. 9.

> Le chevalier Gluck a donné les prèmieres répétitions de son opéra; tous les conoisseurs en sont émerveillés; mais on prévoit que le public en général pourrait bien ne pas comprendre des beautés d'harmonies qui exigent des oreilles plus acoutumées à ce genre de musique. Cependant, il est probable que cet opéra réussira; Gluck a été appelé à Versailles chez la favorite; le Roi lui a beaucoup parlé et l'a très bien traité. Madame la Dauphine, qui le protège ira à la première représentation de son opéra et je crois que cette circonstance en assurera le succès.[159]

Despite the concerns of the comte Mercy-Argentau as to the reaction of the general audience to Gluck's music, *Iphigénie en Aulide* turned out to be a spectacular success. After the premiere that took place on 19 April 1774, Marie-Antoinette wrote to her sister, Maria Christine Josepha: " . . a great triumph, my dear Christine!On the 19th we had the first performance of *Iphigénie*: I was carried away by it, and people can no longer talk of anything else."[160]

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[157] "Je pensais que la musique devait être à repeindre la poésie"— was Gluck's most explicit declaration on the matter, expressed in his *Lettre sur 'Alceste' adressée au Grand-duc Léopold de Toscane* (1769).

[158] Marmontel, *Mémoires*, I, p. 278.

[159] Alfred d'Arneth et Jules Gustave Flammermont, *Correspondance de Marie-Antoinettte avec Joseph II et Kaunitz* (Paris, 1889), p. 444, as quoted by J.-G. Prod'homme, *Gluck* (Paris, 1948; New York: AMS Press, 1978), p. 207.

[160] As quoted by Alfred Einstein, *Gluck* (London: J. M. Dent and Sons Ltd., 1964), p. 138.

From an aesthetic point of view, the success of Gluck's operas with the Parisian public resulted, on the one hand, from the lack of an attractive repertoire in the Opéra[161] and, on the other, from their sensibility, which was new to French opera and different from Italian opera. As opposed to Lully and his successors, the libretti of Gluck's operas were more profound psychologically; passions and emotions seemed much more real and more consistent because of the absence of ballets and lightheartedness. As opposed to Italian operas, Gluck's operas were solidly based on texts, and these were about human passions taken seriously. But, paradoxically, in the eyes of their supporters, both operatic concepts appealed to "natural" sensitivity and emotions.[162]

Just as the arrival in Paris of the Italian opera-buffa troupe in 1752 fuelled the old controversy over the respective merits of French and Italian opera, the success of Gluck's *Iphigénie en Aulide* renewed the debate. Grimm noted in his *Correspondence* shortly after the premiere, that

> Depuis quinze jours on ne pense, on ne rêve plus à Paris que musique. C'est le sujet de toutes nos disputes, de toutes nos conversations, l'âme de tous nos soupers; et il paraitrait même ridicule de pouvoir s'interesser à autre chose.[163]

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[161] See, for example, reports in François Métra, *Correspondance secrète politique et littéraire ou mémoires pour servir à l'histoire des cours, des sociétés et de la littérature en France, depuis le mort de Louis XV* (London, 1787-1790; Genève: Slatkine Reprints, 1967, 3 vols.), I, p. 303 also: Weber, "La musique ancienne."

[162] Very much as during the dispute itself, contemporary authors use similar arguments to prove opposite standpoints. James H. Johnson in "Musical Experience and the Formation of a French Musical Taste," (*Journal of Modern History* 64 (June 1992), pp. 191-226), argues that this sensibility resulted from a development of popular taste, whose points of reference were wholly outside the court's view of the world (p. 215); forgetting that the court was strongly supporting Gluck. Johnson calls it a "revolution in listening" enlarging the sphere of private experience, and "turning away from the opinions of others to the truth of one's own emotions" (p. 222); without mentioning, however, that this enthusiasm was not commonly shared and that the Gluckists had strong opponents. Robert M. Isherwood, in "The Third War of the Musical Enlightenment," reports opinions of the supporters of Italian music, arguing that "Italian music has a direct, popular appeal, and that every sensitive individual is a competent judge of art and taste, versus the Gluckist view that the value of lyric drama lies in its appeal to the mind and soul and that artistic judgement is reserved to trained connoisseurs" (p. 242). According to Isherwood, it was power that "helped to secure victory for the traditionalists" [i.e. supporters of Gluck] (p. 238).

[163] Grimm, *Correspondance littéraire*, April 1774, X, p. 416.

As with the earlier quarrels, the introduction of a new operatic style became more than a topic of conversation: it initiated a heated dispute dividing the public very much along the same lines. In a letter informing her sister about the success of *Iphigénie*, Marie Antoinette also reported the divisions it caused:

> All heads are fermenting as a result of this event, as much as could possibly be imagined—it is incredible, there are dissensions and quarrels, as though it were a matter of some religious dispute; at court, although, I publicly express myself in favour of this inspired work, there are partisanships and debates of a particular liveliness; and in town it seems to be worse still . . .[164]

Mme Necker wrote to Grimm that "Tout Paris, alors à Saint-Pétersbourg, est divisé entre Grétry et Glouck [sic],"[165] alluding to two operatic styles: Italian and French respectively.

The arrival in Paris in 1776 of an Italian operatic composer, Niccolo Piccini, made the dispute even more heated. The old controversy between French and Italian opera took the shape of a battle between supporters of two composers, Gluck and Piccini, epitomizing the two operatic traditions, French and Italian respectively.[166] La Harpe wrote that "Leur [Gluck-Piccini] rivalité réchauffera encore les querelles de musique qui sont bien loin d'être amorties, et qui ont allumé des divisions et des haines qu'il semble que rien ne doive jamais éteindre."[167] According to Grimm, the formerly most brilliant and populated *bureaux d'esprit* were now deserted and no one asked any more whether one was a "Jansenist or Molinist, philosophe or bigot, but whether one was a supporter of Gluck or Piccini."[168] In October 1777, after the premiere of Gluck's opera *Armide*, Madame Riccoboni informed Garrick in London that in Paris

> On s'arrache les yeux ici pour ou contre Gluck . . . Les parents, les amis se disputent et se brouillent au sujet de la musique. Marmontel prêche, l'abbé

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[164] As quoted by Einstein, *Gluck*, p. 138.

[165] As quoted by Marguerite Glotz and Madeleine Maire, Madeleine, *Salons du XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Hachette, 1945), p. 42.

[166] See, for example, La Harpe, *Correspondance littéraire*, I, p. 393.

[167] *Ibid.*, II, p. 64.

[168] *Gazette littéraire de Grimm: histoire, littérature, philosophie, 1753-1790* (Paris: E. Didier, 1854), p. 233.

> Arnaud lance des épigrammes; on ne songe plus à l'Amérique; la mélodie, l'harmonie, voilà le sujet de tous les écrits.[169]

In January 1778 Madame du Deffand in a letter to Horace Walpole, also testified to the division of the Parisian public into two camps.

> Il y a deux partis fort animés l'un contre l'autre, les Piccinniens et les Gluckistes; le Naples [ambassador of Naples] et Marmontel sont à la tête du premier; le public n'a point encore décidé, mais l'*Armide* de Quinault, de la musique de M. Gluck, a eu vingt-huit représentations.[170]

A month later, she reported to Horace Walpole that "[u]ne partie du public ne s'occupe que de la musique; les Gluck et les Piccini partagent la cour et la ville; l'ambassadeur de Naples est à la tête du dernier parti; les gens de l'ancien temps n'aiment ni l'un ni l'autre.[171] "Les meilleurs amis se brouillaient"—noted the marquise de Créquy retrospectively—"les parents se fuyaient, les amants se battaient; les bons diners, dont le meilleur effect a toujours été celui de produire une indulgence réciproque, ne produisaient plus que de la colère ou la plus sombre défiance."[172] In 1782 the baronne d'Oberkirch reported in her *Mémoires*, that

> Les femmes s'en mêlèrent comme les hommes. Ce furent des rages et des cris tels qu'on était souvent oublié de séparer les gens, et qu'il y eut nombre d'amis, d'amants, brouillés pour cette cause. Elle troubla même des ménages. . .[173]

Sophie Gay, who opened her own salon during the Directory, retrospectively described in the *Salons célèbres* how her own family had been divided in the Gluck-Piccini quarrel: while her mother was a devout Gluckist, her father kept a pro-Piccini stance. "My father, having met Piccini"—wrote Sophie Gay—"would bring him home to dine with us, and would call upon me in my exhausted state, already hoarse from my musical declamations, to perform the grand airs of *Dido.*" She could practice for her singing lessons only in the absence of her father.[174]

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[169] A letter of 9 October, 1777, *The private correspondence of Garrick, with the most celebrated persons of his time*, 2 vols. (London: H. Colburn and R. Bentley, 1831-1832), II, p. 634.

[170] *Horace Walpole's Correspondence with Madame Du Deffand and Wiart*, 6 vols., ed. By W. S. Lewis and Warren Hunting Smith (London: Oxford University Press; Humphrey Milford, New Haven, 1939-1962), V, p. 9.

[171] *Ibid.*, p. 19.

[172] *Souvenirs de la Marquise de Créquy 1710 à 1802*, 7 vols. (Paris: Librairie de Fournier Jeune, 1834), V, p. 140.

[173] *Mémoires de la Baronne D'Oberkirch sur la cour de Louis XIV et la société française avant 1789*, ed. by Suzanne Burkard (Paris: Mercure de France, 1970), p. 167.

In fact, the women and the men were engaged in the dispute on opposite sides, very much along the same lines as in the Querelle des Bouffons. In a self-flattering manner, Grimm described the pro-Italian party as having hardly more for its support than good reasons, bewildering music, the suffrage of several impartial artists, and the zeal of Marmontel.[175] In contrast, the pro-French party, according to Grimm, included the Abbé Arnaud, Suard, Bailli du Rollet and "the noise of the orchestra, which has to have the upper hand in all disputes of the world."[176] In reality, however, the supporters of Piccini were much more numerous and powerful than Grimm was ready to admit and, in addition to Marmontel and Grimm himself, included La Harpe, Morellet, Chastellux, Saint-Lambert and Ginguené, to mention only the members of the Académie. The fact that in the quarrel of the 1770s both the supporters and the opponents of Italian music were philosophes and members of the Académie did not enhance their image. A polemical exchange between Arnaud and Marmontel was especially fierce and focused general attention. La Harpe noted in his *Correspondance littéraire* that "La querelle de musique s'echauffe de plus en plus; on en vient aux gros mots. Marmontel et l'abbé Arnaud sont brouillés à feu et à sang, l'un tenant pour Piccini, l'autre pour Gluck: il y a long-temps que ces deux académiciens ne sympathisent pas."[177] Métra, too, reported the rift within the Académie:

> Chacun a trouvé dans l'Académie même, des partisans de son opinion. Si on n'avoit fait que discuter son sentiment, avec les égards & l'honnêteté que le doivent les Membres d'un même corps, il n'y auroit rien à dire: mais on en est venu de part & d'autre aux épigrammes, aux injures & même à une bouderie si tenace qu'on s'évite réciproquement.[178]

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[174] Sophie Gay, *Celebrated saloons*, trans. from the French by L. Willard (Boston: W. H. Crosby and H. P. Nichols, 1851), pp. 181-183.

[175] Marmontel in his "Essai sur les révolutions de la musique en France" (1777) declared himself pro-Piccini.

[176] *Gazette littàraire de Grimm*, p. 233.

[177] La Harpe, *Correspondance littéraire*, I, p. 416.

[178] Métra, *Correspondence secrète*, pp. 417-418.

Because the dispute so badly divided the circle of the philosophes, the marquise de Créquy did not miss the opportunity to point out that, while in theory the philosophes advocated their adherence to tolerance, general freedom, etc., in practice they never implemented them.[179] In her comment on Piccini's opera *Sylvain*, with the libretto by Marmontel, she launched an open attack on the philosophes:

> Le désordre moral et politique était fomenté non-seulement par les gros livres encyclopédiques et les romans orduriers, par les brochures impies et les tragédies en cinq actes, mais jusque par les almanachs des muses et les petits opéras-comiques. Marmontel avait fait une comédie mêlée d'ariettes à l'italienne, dont le but et la moralité consistaient à prouver qu'il était bon d'épouser sa servante et qu'il fallait laisser braconner ses paysans. Cet opéra, nommé *le Sylvain*, contenait mille déclamations folles contre l'inégalité parmi les humains et les préjugés de la naissance. C'était une oeuvre de parti, et toute la corruption des encyclopédistes avait voulu contribuer à la confection de cet opéra, où le manque de naturel et les entorses à la verité se trouvaient à profusion.[180]

In addition to some academicians, musicians and the official *Journal de Paris*, the supporters of Gluck's operatic concept represented "the great, the wealthy, and the ladies," to use Rousseau's phrase. Gluck enjoyed the support of the royal establishment,[181] while Piccini was invited as a result of the manouvering of the king's mistress, Mme du Barry. Marmontel noted in his *Mémoires* that this affected Piccini's reputation and shaped the perception of his music.

> La jeune reine s'étoit déclarée en faveur de Gluck; et Piccini qui, en arrivant, le trouvoit établi dans l'opinion publique, à la ville comme à la cour, non-seulement n'avoit pour lui personne, mais à la cour il avoit contre lui l'odieuse étiquette de musicien protégé par la maitresse du feu roi, et à la ville il avoit pour ennemis tous les musiciens français, à qui la musique allemande étoit plus facile à imiter que la musique italienne, dont ils désespéroient de prendre le style et l'accent.[182]

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[179] *Ibid.*, p. 142.

[180] Marquise de Créqui, *Souvenirs*, IV, p. 253.

[181] In 1774, Marie-Antoinette granted Gluck a pension of 6 thousand livres. See, *Correspondance secrète entre Marie-Thérèse et le Cte de Mercy-Argenteau avec les lettres de Marie-Thérèse et de Marie-Antoinette*, ed. by M. Le chevalier Alfred d'Arneth and M. A. Geffroy, 3 vols. (Paris: Firmin Didot Frères, Fils et Cie, 1874), II, p. 251, n. 2.

[182] Marmontel, *Mémoires*, I, p. 278.

Voltaire, although not involved in the exchange of arguments, adored Gluck. "Nous sommes tous Gluck à Ferney" he declared in May 1774.[183] Later that year he wrote to Mme du Deffand: "Il me parait que vous autres Parisiens, vous allez voir une grande et paisable révolution dans votre gouvernement et dans votre musique. Louis XVI et Gluck vont faire de nouveaux Français."[184]

Unlike the heirs of the philosophes, now badly divided in their support of the Italian operatic style, women had not changed their pro-French loyalty.[185] A contemporary author reporting the success of Gluck's operas with the Parisian public wrote that he saw several women who fell asleep in the second act of *Roland* by Piccini, while *Alceste* and *Armide* by Gluck were causing insomnia among the spectators.[186]

Mme du Deffand, approaching eighty years of age at the time of Gluck's arrival in Paris, was not interested in musical novelties and declared that she did not like either Gluck's or Piccini's music.[187] In fact, as she confessed to Horace Walpole, music never meant much for her. "Je suis comme vous"—wrote the marquise—"la musique n'est pour moi qu'un bruit plus importun qu'agréable."[188] "[j]'aime la musique militare, c'est-à-dire le bruit"—she added a couple of months later commenting upon *Siège d'Orléans*—"on ne parle ni ne chante à ce spectacle, il n'est que pantomime; la musique n'est que les vaudevilles les plus anciens; beaucoup de tambours, de timbales, de bruit, de tintamarre."[189]

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[183] In a lettre à J. B. N. de Lisle, 30 May, 1774, *Correspondance de Voltaire*, XL, p. 429.

[184] A letter of 28 July, 1774, *Ibid.*, XLI, p. 74.

[185] About the division within the ranks of the philosophes, see: La Harpe, *Correspondance littéraire*, I, pp. 481-482; lettre LXXIII, vol. I, pp. 481-482ff about divisions within the Académie caused by the quarrel about music: d'Alembert, Marmontel, Saint-Lambert, le chevalier de Châtelux, l'abbé Morellet tiennent ouvertement pour Piccini [and La Harpe]; l'abbé Arnaud et Suard sont à peu-près les seuls qui tiennent pour Gluck, mais ils font du bruit pour dix, et ont à leur ordres le Journal de Paris" (p. 482).

[186] "La monotonie d'une musique charmante mais languissante fait bâiller plus d'un spectateur; aux représentations de Roland, j'ai vu quelques femmes s'endormir au second acte, & tout le monde le plaint des insomnies que causent *Alceste & Armide*. L'ame agitée de mille mouvements divers par la magie de l'inimitable Gluck rentre difficilement dans un état de calme, & Piccini semble ne s'être jamais douté que l'object de son art pouvoit être de produire des effets de cette nature." Métra, *Correspondance secrète*, I, p. 554.

[187] See, for example, a letter to Voltaire of 3 August, 1774, *Correspondance de Voltaire*, XLI, p. 84; a letter to Horace Walpole of 21 September, 1777: "Je fus hier à la répétition de l'opéra d'*Armide*, par le Chevalier Gluck; il ne m'a pas fait le même plaisir que celui de Lully; cela tient sans doute à mes vieux organes." *Lettres de la Marquise du Deffand à Horace Walpole*, VI (IV), p. 478. On 28 January 1778, Mme du Deffand reported to Walpole, in the midst of the controversy between Gluck's and Piccini's operas: "je n'aimerai vraisemblablement ni l'un ni l'autre." *Ibid.*, VII (V), p. 9. \ See also: II, p. 598; III, pp. 77, 307, 337, 409.

Julie de Lespinasse, in contrast, was deeply impressed by Gluck's operas and was reported to have seen his *Orphée* (1774) several times.[190] The baronne d'Oberkirch proudly confessed in her *Mémoires* to be a "gluckiste et amateur de la musique d'expression."[191] Mme de Genlis, too, declared: "On imagine bien, que je me déclare Gluckiste et que je me moquai de toutes les disputes sur Gluck et Piccini des gens de lettres, qui ne savoient pas un mot de musique."[192] In the salon of Duchess Jules de Polignac, where the supporters of the queen gathered, Gluck himself played music.[193] It was Gluck who was invited by Mme de Mazarin to organize and conduct a musical performance on the occasion of the arrival in Paris of the king of Denmark in 1777.[194] Abbé Morellet reported in his *Mémoires* that Marmontel, an ardent supporter of Piccini, did not succeed in convincing Mme Necker to follow him.[195] According to the Duchesse d'Abrantès, Marmontel had as enemies all the female guests of Morellet's salon.[196] The Duchesse herself declared that although she appreciated Piccini, she admired Gluck.[197]

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[188] A letter of 8 February, 1778, *Horace Walpole's Correspondence with Madame du Deffand*, VII (V), p. 16.

[189] *Ibid.*, p. 66. On March 10, 1775, Madame du Deffand wrote to Horace Walpole: "L'*Iphigenie* et l'*Orphée* de M. Gluck, le *Barbier de Séville* de M. Beaumarchais, m'avaient été extrêmement vantés; on m'a forcée à les voir, ils m'ont ennuyée à la mort." *Ibid.*, VI (IV), pp. 167-168.

[190] See the letters of 22 September 1774; 14 October and 22 October the same year, *Lettres de Mademoiselle de Lespinasse*, ed. by Gustave Isambert, 2 vols. (Paris: Alphonse Lemeure, 1876), I, pp. 136, 163, 174, respectively.

[191] *Mémoires de la Baronne d'Oberkirch*, 26 May [1782], p. 167.

[192] *Mémoires inédits de Madame Comtesse de Genlis sur le dix-huitième siècle et la Révolution française, depuis 1756 jusqu'à nos jours*, 8 vols. (Paris: Ladvocat, 1825), II, p. 267.

[193] Duchesse d'Abrantès, *Histoire des salons de Paris*, 2nd ed. 6 vols. (Paris: Ladvocat, 1837-1838), I, pp. 12 and 282.

[194] *Ibid.*, I, pp. 351-352.

[195] Morellet, *Mémoires*, I, p. 255.

Why did most Parisian salon women support Gluck, rather than Piccini? An anonymous author of a 1777 pamphlet made it explicit that the reasons had nothing to do with music. One of the characters in the pamphlet, a "belle marquise," emphasized Gluck's good manners:

> Nous aurons Glouck [sic] demain à souper: que cet homme est aimable! qui'il est gentil!Il est vrai qu'il dit tout plein de bêtises à table, mais il les dit d'une manière si bien organisée, qu'il est presque impossible de s'apercevoir qu'il n'a pas le sens commun.

Piccini, on the other hand, was less likely to be invited for supper because of his lack of social graces:

> Aurons-nous aussi Piccini? . . . fi donc, quediable coulés-vous faire d'un muet? celui-ci ne parle aucune langue; il ne sçait s'exprimer qu'en gestes & en grimaces Napolitaines, idiome qu'on n'entend pas à Paris. Il a pris un maitre de langue, lorsqu'il parlera, nous scaurons ce qu'il dira, ou pour mieux dire ce qu'il vaut. Qu'il vaille ce qu'il vaudra . . . il ne vaudra jamais *le célèbre, le divin, l'adorable* Glouck: c'est mon musicien, je ne voudrais pas le changer contre Rameau lui même s'il revenait de l'autre monde. Piccini dont on nous vante tant le génie, n'est qu'un petit garcon auprès de lui.[198]

The assumption of the lack of knowledge of women in the Gluck-Piccini dispute was taken as a matter of course:

> La raison veut que lorsq'on prononce sur deux artistes qui sont en concurence, on connaisse leur art: un juge ou des juges qui décident un

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[196] *Histoire des salons de Paris*, I, p. 375. Duchesse d'Abrantès was apparently referring to Mme Saurin, Mme Suard, Mme Pourah, her mother, and Mme Helvétius; see: I, p. 362.

[197] D'Abrantès, *Histoire des salons de Paris*, I, p. 371.

[198] *Problème qui occupe la capitale de la Monarchie Françoise ou demande si Mr. Glouck est plus grand Musicien que Mr. Piccini* (n.p., 1777), in Querelle des Gluckistes *et des Piccinistes*, ed. François Lesure, 2 vols. (Genève, 1984, reprint of the 1781 ed.), II, pp. 243-244. Romain Rolland gives a rather different picture of Gluck: "Gluck lacked self-control, and was irritable, and could not get used to the customs of society. He was plain-spoken to the verge of coaresness, and, according to Christian von Mannlich, on the occasion of his first visit to Paris he scandalized twenty times a day those who spoke to him. He was insensitive to flattery, but was enthusiastic about his own works." *Some Musicians of former days*, pp. 281-282.

> procès, doivent en savoir la cause; sans quoi leurs sentences deviennent arbitraires. Il n'est point de Science qui demande plus de capacité entendement, que celle de la musique.[199]

It was thus, according to the pamphleteer, the excessive attachment to manners, social prejudice and the lack of true knowledge that motivated women to take the pro-Gluckist stance.

Although in an unfair manner, the author alluded to what had been a traditional perception of the quarrel as exceeding purely aesthetic aspects and to some features characteristic of Parisian salons. Women's choice in favour of Gluck's operas was motivated by the same reasons as their pro-French stance in the earlier quarrels: it fit the traditional salon philosophy both aesthetically and politically.

Gluck represented the French operatic tradition with the emphasis on drama which made Grimm write in his *Gazette littéraire* that Gluck owed the success of his operas primarily to their texts, not to music. "Chevalier Gluck a sacrifié toutes les ressources et toutes les beautés de son art à l'effet théâtral." This was wise, according to Grimm, as the French were traditionally more sensitive to the dramatic rather than the musical side of operas.[200] The success of Gluck's operas performed in Paris with the ladies was thus a result of his adherence to the French operatic tradition which made his music appealing to a more aesthetically conservative part of the audience.

Representing the tradition of the French national opera Gluck gained the support of the political establishment and the traditional social elite. From this perspective, women's pro-Gluckist stance can be interpreted as a result of their need to legitimize themselves *vis-à-vis* the establishment; that is, as a consequence of their submissiveness not only to men, but also to public opinion in general, as advocated by contemporary educators, with Rousseau in the foreground.[201] Placing themselves on the "safe" side of the dispute (not only with the majority, but also with the mighty), was the only socially acceptable choice they could make.

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[199] *Problème qui occupe la capitale de la Monarchie Françoise*, II, pp. 243-244.

[200] *Gazette littéraire de Grimm*, p. 228.

[201] While men could fly in the face of public opinion, for women "il ne suffit pas qu'elles soient estimables, il faut qu'elles soient estimées." Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile* (Paris: Garnier-Flammarion), p. 475.

It needs to be emphasized that such a choice was motivated by a number of reasons and did not necessarily imply aesthetic exclusivity. In discusing the repertoire of the Parisian Opéra in the middle of the eighteenth century, William Weber argues that its noticeable conservatism was not a result of royal imposition of certain practices and tastes upon the public, but rather it resulted "from mutual consent to a rigid order of taste," since "most parts of the ruling classes at the Opéra welcomed this kind of politically nostalgic, state-oriented theatrical experience, just as they opted for a centralized monarchy in the 1660s."[202] This does not mean, continues the author, that Italian music, which was extensively played in Paris, especially at private concerts (such as those of La Pouplinière's), had no impact upon public taste. And yet, the Opéra remained immune to changes. The attitude of the public to the repertoire of the Opéra was exemplified by the Regent, the duc Philippe d'Orléans, himself: while supporting performances of Italian music at home, he nevertheless did not force his taste on the Opéra. The old repertoire, *la musique ancienne*, was a part of a state tradition that should not be disturbed.[203]

This observation refers us back to the extra-aesthetic aspects of the operatic quarrels and further indicates the affiliation of women with the traditional operatic style as indicative of their "political correctness."

## The Crisis of the Authority of Judgement[204]

The eighteenth-century quarrels over the French and the Italian opera were also disputes over the authority of judgement in matters of taste resulting from the clash of two opposite modes of criticism. On the one hand there was the honnête one with the traditional concept of taste as a property of the higher social orders: an absolute principle based on the knowledge of relations within society and a web of principles of honnêteté. On the other hand, there was the pedantic or savant mode, to use the seventeenth-century parlance, based on formal education and specialized knowledge.

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[202] Weber, "*La musique ancienne*," p. 68.

[203] *Ibid.*, pp. 72-73.

[204] A version of this section has been accepted for publication. Jolanta T. Pekacz, "Authority of Aesthetic Judgement in Old Regime France: *Salonnières* and the *Philosophes*," *Journal of the History of Ideas*, forthcoming, 1998.

If in seventeenth century Parisian salons these two modes coexisted relatively peacefully, it was because of the mutual agreement between salonnières and their guests that specialized knowledge should be accommodated into an honnête discourse, not displayed, and that polite society had the upper hand in matters of taste. The confrontation between the two modes of criticism was eliminated by the limitation of self (not only by a salon hostess in order to play her role properly, but also by the salon guests) in favor of the consensus of the group.

The eighteenth century did not break immediately with the traditional concept of taste as a property of polite society. Dedications of some musical pieces produced in the first decades of the century leave no doubt as to who was an authority for the musicians. For example, the composer Lemaire flattered the comte d'Argenson to whom he sent a book of his cantatas in 1724: "I do not fear to put it before the eyes of the public if it has already met with your approval. "Similarly, in 1729 Jean-Baptiste Anet desired to place himself under the patronage of the comte de Clermont by inserting the following declaration: "This little work, which I dare not produce privately without trembling, will now appear boldly in public since it has pleased Your Highness to put it under your protection. I flatter myself that no one will dare to despise what Your Highness has approved."[205]

The concept of the "public" rather than a composer or a professional musician as an arbiter of musical taste, can also be found in Louis Fuzelier's preface to *Les amours déguisez, balet*[!]*représenté par l'Académie royale de musique l'an 1713* (Paris, 1720), in which the author made it clear that it was "inutile aux auteurs de défendre leurs pièces de théâtre. C'est au public à les justifier. "The prevailing notion of the "public" as identical with polite society is testified by Nicolas Racot de Grandval, *maitre de clavecin*, who in 1732 plagiarized large portions of the *Comparaison de la musique italienne et de la musique françoise* (1704-1706) by Lecerf de la Viéville, obviously assuming a responsive audience:

> En matière de Musique, on distingue deux genres de peuple: l'un qu'on appelle le dernier peuple, qui sont les domestiques, les Garçons de boutique, les

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[205] As quoted in François Lesure, *Music and Art in Society* (University Park and London: The Pennsylvania University Press, 1968), pp. 41-42.

> artisans, les Porteurs de chaise etc., qui écoutent les chansons du Pont neuf et ne vont point à l'Opéra; l'autre, un peuple d'honnêtes gens, une multitude distinguée, qui fréquente les Spectacles, mais qui portant point de connoissance des Régles, est peuple à cet égard.[206]

The social hierarchy underlying the concept of taste and the importance of honnêteté is also exemplified by the position of the most devoted music patrons in eighteenth-century Paris: La Pouplinière (1692-1762) and baron de Bagge (1722-1791). Despite their enthusiasm for music and patronizing many musicians, neither of them was considered an authority on musical taste. William Weber has suggested that it was an ambiguous social status that excluded patrons like La Pouplinière from the circle of authorities of taste: despite his relatively high social position he did not, however, hold a major title.[207] Indeed, for the author of a satirical play, La Pouplinière represented a "bourgeois patron" exemplifying a "mixture of arrogance and lowness" and thus "all the hypocrisy of society."[208] In other words, as a bourgeois patron, La Pouplinière was rejected because he interfered with the traditional nobles' roles. But La Pouplinière also epitomized what was strongly resented by the middle bourgeoisie: an ostentatiously luxurious and extravagant lifestyle and the social pretentions and presumptions of the financiers, rationally and morally irreconcilable with traditional bourgeois values.[209]

Baron de Bagge's case reveals another aspect of the question of authority over matters of taste. In comparison with La Pouplinière, he had a less impressive lineage: upon moving to Paris in 1750 he was registered merely as a "native of Courland" by the French authorities.[210] But, unlike La Pouplinière, he was not criticized for being a bourgeois, but for his musical fanaticism, pretentiousness and excessive generosity to musicians. Both La Pouplinière and de Bagge epitomized the stereotype of the music lover most frequently satirized in their times. Both were questioned as authorities on taste, not only because of their ambiguous social status, but, more importantly, due to the very assertiveness of their musical interests and their compulsive, almost fanatic, enthusiasm, violating the limitations designated for honnête gens and placing them outside the circle of arbiters of taste.[211] The fact that both La Pouplinière and de Bagge became *personnes de revue* suggests that they were not accepted by the authors of these plays (who were not nobles); in other words, they were rejected as authorities on musical taste by both the traditional elite and non-nobles alike. While for the former they violated the principles of honnêteté by exaggeration, for the latter they compromised what the newly ennobled considered a source of prestige.

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[206] Nicolas Racot de Grandval, *Essai sur le bon goust en musique* (Paris: Pierre Prault, 1732), p. 52.

[207] See the discussion in William Weber, "Learned and General Musical Taste in Eighteenth-Century France"; also H. Thirion, *La vie privée des financiers au XVIIIe siècle* (Paris: Librairie Plon, 1895), p. 75.

[208] A commentary on *Le Protecteur Bourgeois or La Confiance trahie* by Antoine Bret (written in 1763, banned from performance, and published in 1772) in *Journal Encyclopédique* (Bouillon, 1772), VIII, p. 268.

[209] Ostentation and exaggeration were most resented. For a discussion about bourgeois' attitudes toward financiers, see Elinor G. Barber, *The Bourgeoisie in 18th Century France* (Princeton University Press, 1973), pp. 90-98.

[210] See: Georges Cucuel, "Un mélomane au XVIIIe siècle. Le Baron de Bagge et son

The traditional concept of taste as a property of non-professional polite society and the ultimate authority of this society in artistic matters was challenged by the philosophes in the Querelle des Bouffons. In his *Lettre sur Omphale* (1752), Grimm made it explicit that the ultimite arbiters in matters of artistic taste should be the philosophes. He contrasted them with "the public" and denied the latter any right of judgement independent of that of the philosophes. Where taste is concerned, Grimm declared, the court gives the nation the fashions and the philosophes the laws. It was up to the philosophes and the men of letters, as "professors of their nation", to establish taste in matters of music and of all the fine arts, "to enlighten the multitude with their knowledge and to guide it with their precepts."[212]

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temps (1718-1791)," *L'Année Musicale* (1911), p. 146.

[211] For example, Madame de Graffigny mentions La Pouplinière in her *Correspondance* but does not make any comments about his concerts. The Baronne d'Oberkirch did not report upon concerts given by the baron de Bagge, whereas she did comment on the musical interests of the comte d'Albaret. See: *Correspondence de Madame de Graffigny*, vol I: 1716-17 juin 1739, ed. English Showalter; vol. II: 19 juin 1739-24 septembre 1740, ed. English Showalter *et al* (Oxford: The Voltaire Foundation at the Taylor Institution, 1985 and 1989).

[212] "C'est aux philosophes et aux gens de letters que la nation doit, même sans s'en douter, son goût devenu depuis peu général pour la bonne musique, ainsi que pour tous les beaux-arts. . . . C'est [aux gens de lettres] comme professeurs de leur nation et de l'univers, d'éclairer la multitude par leurs lumières et de la guider par leurs préceptes." Grimm, "Lettre sur Omphale," *Correspondance littéraire*, XVI, pp. 301-302.

> Ce goût, quoique général en France, est encore vague; il est souvent balancé par de vieux préjugés qui semblent respectables par leur faiblesse même, comme quelquefois la vieillesse n'a d'autre titre à la considération que sa décrépitude. C'est encore aux philosophes et au temps de fixer ce goût, et de le rendre sûr chez la nation.[213]

In a rather paternalistic manner Grimm expressed his hope that it was not too late for the public to learn the art of listening to music with the same sensitivity as did the people of Athens. In ten years, continued Grimm, the repertoire of the Parisian Opéra would change radically and there would no longer be: old tragédies lyriques, like *Atys* and *Armide* by Lully, and *Hippolite et Aricie* by Rameau; ballets, like the *Europe galante*, and the *Fêtes de l'Hymen et de l'Amour*, or pastorales, like *Issé.* A new repertoire would replace the old one and the taste of the public would improve, due, primarily, to the educational work of the philosophes.

Rousseau, in his *Lettre sur la musique françoise* (1753), followed Grimm's views as to the leading role of the philosophes in aesthetic matters: ". . . c'est au Poëte à faire de la Poësie, et au Musicien à faire de la Musique, mais il n'appartient qu'au Philosophe de bien parler de l'une et de l'autre."[214] In his article "Goût" in the *Encyclopédie* Voltaire compared taste to philosophy, each being the domaine of a small number of privileged souls.[215] D'Alembert, too, believed that taste and judgement were the right of the intellectual elite.[216] Taste was for him not only a matter of reason, but also a matter of the senses, the feelings and the imagination. Nevertheless, d'Alembert arbitrarily concluded that it was the philosophe who had the sole right to formulate standards of taste.

In the 1750s the philosophes' views on who was an authority on taste were just as elitist and arbitrary as those of the members of polite society whom they criticized; and equally far from accepting an idea of equality of taste. On the contrary, they were perceived by some of their contemporaries as a kind of coterie trying to impose their views upon others. Fréron made it a frequent topic in his *Année Littéraire* and even the Abbé Raynal, who was more a friend than an enemy of the philosophes, wrote in his private newsletter during 1754 about "ce ton dur et cette mauvaise humeur que quelques gens de lettres prennent aujourd'hui pour de la philosophie."

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[213] *Ibid.*, p. 301.

[214] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Lettre sur la musique françoise*, in *Oeurves complètes*, V, p, 292.

[215] *Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts et des métiers, par une société de gens de lettres*. Paris: Briasson, David, Le Breton, Durand, 1751-1780, c.v. "Goût," vol. VII (1757), p. 761.

[216] D'Alemebrt included his views on taste and judgement in artistic matters in his *Fragment sur l'opéra* and in *Réflexions sur l'usage et l'abus de la philosophie dans les matières de goût* (1754) which he read before the French Academy on March 14, 1757.

> Si l'on quitte le ton de la critique [continued Raynal], c'est pour élever au troisième ciel les auteurs de l'*Encyclopédie* et celui de l'*Histoire naturelle* [Buffon]; il n'y a plus rien de louable qu'eux. Ce sont eux qui nous ont appris à penser et à écrire, qui ont rétabli le bon goût et la philosophie, et qui les conservent. Cependant, on demande tous les jours qu'est-ce qu'ils ont fait. Ces messieurs, estimables sans doute pour leurs connaissances, leur esprit, leur moeurs, dégradent leur philosophie par un ton dominateur et législatif, par une affectation de s'arroger le despotisme littéraire et par la manière de s'encenser mutuallement partout et sans fin . . .[217]

From this perspective, the Querelle des Bouffons was an attack launched by one elite (that of intellect, represented by the philosophes) against another (that of birth and privilege, represented by polite society). Seen this way, it implied a disruption between salon women and their guests along gender lines. Just as from the very beginning of the controversy women had been associated with the pro-French party and with honnêteté, the meaning of this association changed dramatically. While in the Lecerf-Raguenet and the Lullists-Ramists disputes women's pro-French stance was a matter of course, not of judgement, during the Querelle des Bouffons the condescending tone directed at women as supporters of the French opera appears for the first time. Women are no longer perceived as "natural" and "superior" judges in matters of taste, but as ignoramuses who should listen to the true elite in these matters, the philosophes. While for the seventeenth-century "feminists," such as Jacques Du Bosc, women's lack of knowledge was the source of their superior intuition and therefore of their insightful judgement in matters of taste, for the philosophes in the mid-eighteenth century lack of knowledge was the main reason for the exclusion of women from the circle of judges.

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[217] Grimm, *Correspondance littéraire*, II, pp. 144-145.

Judgement required knowledge which women did not have; they did not have it because it was not needed for the roles they were supposed to play in society: according to the *Encyclopédie*, woman was to be ensconced in domesticity; the boundaries of her existence determined by her role as daughter, wife and mother.[218] "A woman is made to please a man"—was Rousseau's statement in the matter, which sounds like a variation of the recipe for the perfect salonnière.

> A woman's education [continued Rousseau] must therefore be planned in relation to man. To be pleasing in his sight, to win his respect and love, to train him in childhood, to tend him in manhood, to counsel and console, to make his life pleasant and happy, these are the duties of women for all time, and this is what she should be taught while she is young.[219]

While Lecerf de la Viéville supported his pro-French arguments by quoting the stance of honnête women, the philosophes would use the same stance to demonstrate women's ignorance and obscurantism. In this respect, Rousseau and the philosophes were on the same side of the barricade: they all unanimously classified women in the category of ignoramuses with the "great and the wealthy. "Good taste was no longer gendered female.

Eighteenth-century eulogies of the salonnières issued by the philosophes best demonstrate the shift in attitudes toward women. Unlike their seventeenth-century predecessors praising women as exquisite arbiters of taste, the philosophes focus exclusively on manners and propriety, thus on the formal, if not merely decorative, roles of women. Women are not supposed to judge (in this respect they should follow their leaders, the philosophes), but to provide good manners. This is what made it possible for the same authors, such as d'Alembert, to write both eulogies and criticism of salon women. While in eulogies women are praised for their manners and the tactful guidance of a salon conversation, elsewhere they are scolded for their attempts to judge. The latter is explicit in d'Alembert's *Fragment sur l'opéra*, published shortly after the Querelle des Bouffons, where the author expressed his view that French women were particularly poor judges of music.

> J'en suis fâché pour ce sexe aimable qui s'érige, surtout en France, en juge suprême de ce qui concerne le goût; mais je n'ai vu à Paris que bien peu de

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[218] See: Terry Smiley Dock, *Woman in the Encyclopedie. A Compendium* (Madrid: Studia Humanitatis, 1983), pp. 101-111.

[219] Rousseau, *Emile*, p. 328.

> femmes qui se connussent en musique; je ne veux pas dire qui sçussent décider si une basse étoit dans les règles, si un chant étoit bien composé; il y a mille femmes assez instruites pour être en état de porter un tel jugement. Je veux dire qui se connussent à l'expression, qui sçussent en démêler les nuances, la force ou la foiblesse, la vérité ou le contresens.[220]

The generic use of the category of "women" made the criticism less specific and allowed d'Alembert to use the condescending tone about women's ability to judge and at the same time frequent Mlle de Lespinasse's salon.

The very relegation of salonnières to the sphere of politeness rendered their potential judgements ridiculous (as not based on any rules, sentiment or intuition, but exclusively on the rules of politeness) and provided further arguments against such ventures. Morellet wrote that Mme Geoffrin, during her apprenticeship in Mme de Tencin's salon, strictly followed such rules if the circumstances forced her to take a stance.

> [chez madame Tencin] on parloit de deux hommes de letters, M. Glover, auteur du poeme de *Léonidas*, et M. Algarotti, Italien, qui a laissé dans sa langue et dans la notre des ouvrages agréables; le premier, Anglois, pesant, sans politesse et sans usage; le second, d'une figure aimable et du meilleur ton: 'Je ne lirai jamais, dit-elle [Madame Geoffrin], les ouvrages de ces deux auteurs; mais je penche fort à croire que ceux de M. Algarotti sont meilleurs.'—'Voilà bien, dit M. de Fontenelle, un jugement de femme.'[221]

In the Querelle des Bouffons the philosophes failed as leaders of the nation in matters of taste: the choices were made without consulting their opinion and the Italian troupe was expelled from Paris by royal order. However, the question of who had the authority to judge returned in the 1770s, during the quarrel between the Gluckists and the Piccinists. Jean-Baptiste Antoine Suard, in an article of March 1777 defending Gluck's music, advocated that, although men of letters have the right to issue their opinions about music,

> Le Public est le juge naturel de tous les Arts, à plus forte raison cette portion du Public qui, joignant a un esprit naturellement plus délié, plus droit, plus vigoreux que celui du commun des hommes, a perfectionné ses facultés

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[220] "Fragment sur l'opéra," in *Oeuvres et correspondances inedites de d'Alembert*, ed. by Charles Henry (Genève: Slatkine, 1967), pp. 161-162.

[221] Morellet, "Portrait de Madame Geoffrin" in *Eloges de Madame Geoffrin, contemporaine de Madame du Deffand, par MM. Morellet, Thomas et D'Alambert, suivis de lettres de Madame Geoffrin et à Madame Geoffrin et d'un Essay sur la Conversation, etc. etc., par M. Morellet* (Paris: H. Nicolle, 1812), p. 14.

> naturelles par l'excercice, par la réflexion, par l'analyse et la comparaison des différens objects qui appartiennent au goût, à l'imagination & à l'entendement.[222]

Through his convoluted style, Suard directly referred to the traditional notion of taste as an attribute of polite society, opposed both to the common man and to the philosophes, and thus excluded most of his opponents from this group. Several months later, Suard further clarified his point by questioning the philosophes' real involvement in music and thus their authority to judge it. In a letter to Gluck he wrote:

> Nos Gens de Lettres, à l'exception d'un petit nombre, aiment peu les Arts, ne les cultivent point, ne vivent pas avec les Artistes. Ils vont entendre l'Opéra nouveau comme ils vont voir les Tableaux au Louvre, pour en causer à diner, assigner les rang aux Artistes, & prouver qu'avec de l'esprit on peut parler bien de tout.[223]

Later in his letter, Suard explained that the confusion over Gluck's music and the negative position taken by the men of letters was caused by the fact that music was the domain of senses and imagination, rather than of esprit and reason. Not surprisingly, wrote Suard, the men of letters evaluated music according to their rational principles. Unfortunately, they imposed their judgement on the public from the position of this self-appointed superiority, while in reality, the arts were made for the public; they should be equally pleasing for both the ignorant and connoisseurs and both had the right to have their opinion and to express it.[224]

In a similar vein, Abbé Arnaud called the pro-Italian party "les pédans, les coeurs froids, . . . qui voudroient prescrire à l'Artiste la marche de l'Artisan.[225] Gluck, who himself entered the battle of articles, reacted to the attacks of La Harpe by arguing that it was not necessary to be savant to decide the value of music, it was the "public" that ultimately determined it:

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[222] "Seconde lettre de l'anonyme de Vaugirard [J.B.A. Suard] aux auteurs du *Journal de Paris*," *Journal de Paris*, 25 March 1777; in François Lesure (ed). *Querelle des Gluckistes et des Piccinistes*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1781, Gèneve: Minkoff Reprints, 1984), I, p. 127.

[223] "Résponse de l'anonyme de Vaugirard à M. de Chevalier Gluck," *Journal de Paris*, 23 October, 1777; Lesure, *Querelle des Gluckistes et des Piccinistes*, I, p. 285.

[224] *Ibid.*, pp. 286-287.

[225] François Arnaud, "La soirée perdue à l'Opéra" in *Oeuvres complètes*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1808; Genève: Slatkine, 1971), II, p. 53.

> You prove to me that it is sufficient to be a well-read man, in order to speak about everything. Now I am convinced that the Italian is the most excellent, the true music . . . I sincerely beg the forgiveness of the gods of taste for having deafened the hearers of my operas; the number of their representations and the applause the public has been good enough to bestow on them do not prevent my seeing how pitiable they are.[226]

In a way apparently flattering the salonnières, Grimm ascribed the lack of consensus among the philosophes in the Gluck-Piccini dispute to the lack of feminine guidance.

> Le désordre et l'anarchie qui ont régné dans ce parti depuis la mort de Mlle de Lespinasse et depuis la paralysie de Mme Geoffrin, prouvent combien la sagesse de leur gouvernement avait prévenu de maux, combien elle avait dissipé d'orages, et surtout combien elle avait sauvé de ridicules. Jamais, sous leur respectable administration, nous n'eussions vu toutes les scènes auxquelles la guerre de la musique a donné lieu; jamais.[227]

In fact, the author designated a role for women in salons: they were supposed to introduce consensus between their guests, and not discord; and they were accepted as long as they could transmute the Enlightenment's divisions into harmony. Thus, women were reduced to formal roles and were denied the right to express their own opinions, since such opinions could cause further divisions in the ranks of their guests. While the philosophes made their views known by publishing them, the opinions of salon women are far more difficult to reconstruct. They are available primarily through their letters and memoires. Through performing their formal roles, women ensured (formal) consensus among the *philosophes*, whose fragility revealed itself during the Gluck-Piccini dispute.

But Grimm was wrong: the Querelle des Bouffons in the 1750s already broke with the modes of polite discourse as advocated by the salons; the disruption in the ranks of the philosophes was not caused by the death of Julie de Lespinasse (as Grimm claimed) but it was already there. The Gluck-Piccini quarrel revealed this. What Grimm rightly captured was that although having their opinions, salon women did not made them public, nor did they engage themselves in the quarrels. This was very honnête. (For example, Montesquieu, an honnête homme, did not take part in quarrels either and blamed Voltaire for taking part in contemporary disputes: "Voltaire n'écrira jamais une bonne histoire: il est comme les moines qui n'écrivent pas pour le sujet qu'ils traitent, mais pour la gloire de leur ordre; Voltaire écrit pour son couvent."[228])

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[226] *Journal de Paris*, 12 October 1777, in *The Collected Correspondence and Papers of Christoph Willibald Gluck*, ed. by Hedwig and E.H. Mueller von Asow, translated by Steward Thomson (New York: St Martin's Press, 1962), p. 100.

[227] Grimm, *Correspondance littéraire*, July 1777, vol. XI, p. 495. This time, however, Grimm did not take an active part in the dispute.

By contrast to Grimm, the Gluck-Piccini dispute made the marquise de Créquy comment that salons were not places were consensus was reached, but rather hatcheries of disorder.

> La discorde s'était introduite au bureau de Mlle Lespinasse, sanctuaire de la philosophie moderne, à l'Académie française' où personne n'aurait pu dire à quoi servait un dièze, et jusque dans le salon de la Duchesse de la Trémouille, où tout le monde chantait faux. . . . enfin, les bureaux d'esprit étaient devenus des arènes où l'on s'acharnait contre la séduisante Armide, ou la malhereuse Iphigénie du Chevalier Gluck, qu'on voulait absolument sacrifier à la *Bonne fille* du Signor Piccini et *vice versa.*[229]

The Duchesse d'Abrantès, on her part, stated that at the time of the Gluck-Piccini quarrel "La société perdait déja de son urbanité dans la discussion, et les disputes commençaient."[230]

The rift between two parts of the Parisian audience, one supporting the French, another the Italian opera, was thus also a rift between the philosophes and salon women. In the Gluck-Piccini quarrel a new emphasis was placed on knowledge (or the lack of it) and it was on this ground that women were excluded from the circle of judges. And it was not practical musical knowledge they lacked (as most women were routinely trained at least in the rudiments of making music, while most men were not); it was the lack of general education and, more importantly, the lack of ability to reason. In the midst of the dispute between the Gluckists and the Piccinists, the baron d'Holbach reformulated the old argument, known from the seventeenth-century *querelle des femmes*, that women were unsuited for abstract thinking but they excelled in sensibility. D'Holbach located women's place in sensationalist epistemology in his *Ethnocratie* (1776):

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[228] *Oeuvres complètes de Montesquieu*, ed. by Roger Caillois, 2 vols. (Paris: Gallimard, 1949), I, p. 1252.

[229] Marquise de Créquy, *Souvenirs*, V, p. 140.

[230] *Ibid.*, I, p. 373.

> Les femmes, par la foiblesse de leur organes, ne sont pas susceptibles des connoissances abstraites, des études profondes et suivies qui conviennent aux hommes; mais la sensibilité de leur ames, la vivacité de leur esprit, la mobilité de leur imagination, les rend très susceptibles d'adopter avec chaleur les sentiments du coeur.[231]

However, the supremacy of women in the realm of feelings was not enough for the author to make them arbiters of the arts. It was the solid education that they lacked to render proper judgement, as judgement was not a matter of feelings but of reason.

> On remarque que pour l'ordinaire les femmes sentent très-vivement, mais raisonnent fort peu. Ce défault en elles vient de ce que l'éducation ne les habitue point à réfléchir, ne donne pas des idées de justice propres à modérer les fantasies, les saillies subites de leur imagination, leurs caprices inconstants. Faute de leur apprendre à raisonner, de les accoutumer à penser, à peser les suites de leurs actions, les femmes, souvent injustes dans leur volontés, demeurent des enfants gâtés, des despotes quelquefois très incommodes dans la Société.[232]

Although operating from different premises, Rousseau and d'Holbach created an inescapable framework for the exclusion of women from the circle of arbiters of taste in eighteenth-century France: while one advocated a limited education for women; the other excluded them from things public precisely because of this limited education. Later eighteenth-century authors merely follow one of these avenues of thought or another. Joly de Saint-Vallier, for example, in his *Traité sur l'education de deux sexes* (1783) advocated that it would be a waste of time for women to study seriously, since they are incapable of succeeding at it. "Les femmes n'ont ni le temps, ni la force, ni la réflexion, nécessaire pour soutenir de pareils travaux."[233] Another author echoed him and argued that women's task and destiny is to charm;[234] and Restif de la Bretonne emphasized the necessity to inculcate in young girls that they are destined for a man, who is the master and sovereign of society.[235] An editor of the *Bibliothèque Universelle des Dames* (1785-97) expressed the view, that

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[231] P. H. T. D'Holbach, *Ethocratie* (Amsterdam, 1776, reprint New York: Hildesheim, 1973), p. 105.

[232] *Ibid.*, p. 199.

[233] Joly de Saint-Vallier in *Traité sur l'éducation des deux sexes* (London, 1783), p. 90.

[234] "Charmer est leur devoir, comme il est leur destin." Marquis de Lezay-Marnézia, *Plan de lecture pour une jeune dame* (Paris: Prault, 1784), p. 3.

> Les femmes ne sont point destinées par la Nature, et moins encore par nos institutions sociales, à faire de l'éloquence un excercice public, à parler dans nos tribunes, dans nos chaires, dans nos barreux. Mais la conversation, parmi nous, est le lycée de leur esprit, comme de leur coeur; c'est là que se développe la délicatesse de leur pensées et le charme de leur sensibilité.[236]

In salon practice it meant the same as had been the case before: the most appropriate role for a salonnière was to navigate the conversation tactfully, without letting their own views be known. Amidst numerous eulogies praising salonnières for what they *did* (as opposed to what they *did not do*), there is the explicit account of Sébastien Mercier indicating precisely what interests us here: what was the expected role of a salonnière as a judge *versus* that of her male guests? In the chapter on the "Ton du grand monde" in his *Tableau de Paris* (1781-88) Mercier writes that

> Plusieurs femmes ayant perfectionné leur esprit par le commerce d'hommes éclairés, réunissent en elles les avantages des deux sexes, valent mieux à la lettre que les homme célebres dont elles ont emprunté une partie des connoissances qui les distinguent. Ce n'est point un savoir pédantesque, capable de décréditer toute connoissance, c'est une maniere propre d'oser penser et parler juste, fondé sur-tout sur l'étude des hommes.[237]

According to Mercier, no judgement was expected from a salonnière, as she was not supposed to have anything to say that would differ from the opinion of her master and guide, the philosophe, regardless of her own opinions and feelings. Julie de Lespinasse incarnated the ideal: although deeply moved by Gluck's operas and convinced of their superiority, she kept her opinion to herself and believed that she had "neither intelligence, nor knowledge, nor folly to assign the places and the ranks to talents."[238]

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[235] "Il faut de bonne heure inculquer aux Jeunes-filles qu'elles sont destinées pour l'homme, qui est le chèf et le Souverain de la société." Restif de la Bretonne, *Les Gynographes*, in *L'Oeuvre de Restif de la Bretonne*, ed. H. Bachelin, 9 vols. (Paris: Editions du Trianon, 1930-1932), III, p. 95.

[236] As quoted by Vivienne Mylne, "*Bibliothèque Universelle des Dames* (1785-97)," in *et al*, *Woman and Society in Eighteenth-Century France. Essays in Honour of John Stephenson Spink*, ed. by Eva Jacobs *et al.* (London: The Athlone Press, 1979), p. 129.

[237] Louis-Sébastien Mercier, *Tableau de Paris*, 12 vols. (Amsterdam: n.p., 1783-1788), IV, pp. 105-106.

Allowed to behave in their own way, women became a nuisance and the epitome of an ambiguous influence on things public. Even Marmontel, who owed so much to his cautiousness in contacts with "the great, the wealthy, and the ladies," did not avoid a condescending tone in speaking of the influence of women on public taste. Marmontel attributed the vanity and corruptability of the *parterre* in the Parisian Opéra to the "effeminizing" influence of the loges; having no women in the pit, he believed, the taste of the parterre might be less delicate, but it was also "less capricious, and above all more manly (*mâle*) and more firm. ”The pit, then, was the perfect masculine mixture of instinct and reason.[239]

In contrast to the Querelle des Bouffons, the notion of "knowledge" used in the Gluck-Piccini dispute became an ideological concept and the lack of knowledge a tool of deprecation used by both parties involved. While in the earlier quarrel women were classified as ignorant and their judgements as illegitimate, in the Gluck-Piccini quarrel women were using the same arguments against the philosophes involved in the pro-Italian party.[240]

The Duchesse d'Abrantès, writing retrospectively in her *Histoire des salons*, found the Gluck-Piccini dispute rather compromising for the men of letters precisely because they were issuing judgements on matters they did not properly understand:

> Quand on veut revoir sans partialité tous ces jugements à peu près stupides, rendus cependant par des hommes d'esprit, mais sur un object qu'ils ne

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[238] 31 Jan. 1775, *Lettres de Mademoiselle des Lespinasse*, II, p. 225.

[239] Marmontel, "Parterre" in *Supplément à l'Encyclopédie, ou Dictionnaire raisonné des sciences, des arts, et des métiers* (Amsterdam, 1777), after Jeffrey S. Ravel, "Seating the Public: Spheres and Loathing in the Paris Theatres, 177-1788," *French Historical Studies* 18/1 (1993), p. 192.

[240] Arguments that the philosophes were illegitimate judges of music because of their insufficient knowledge were advanced in the Querelle des Bouffons, but not by women. For example, Claude-Carloman de Ruhlière in 1753 called the members of the coin de la reine *géomètres* who had no idea about music: "They are to music what a man is to art who knows that green is the combination of yellow and blue" (*Jugement de l'orchestre de l'Opéra*, in Launay, *La querelle des Bouffons*, I, p. 441. Caux de Coppeval wrote that the philosophes and savants had no right to consider themselves arbiters of taste because they had "l'esprit sec, & le coeur froid." Caux de Coppeval, *Apologie du goût français*, p. 4.

> comprenaient pas, on est bien modeste en recevant quelquefois une louange qui vous est donné par l'inattention ou la complaisance, et l'on est d'autre part bien peu affecté d'une critique qui n'a pas plus de base pour s'appuyer.[241]

For d'Abrantès, the philosophes' involvement in the dispute was motivated by reasons which had nothing to do with music. La Harpe, one of the most active pamphleteers on the pro-Italian side, was motivated primarily by envy and hate. Why? Because Gluck was admired by the crowned heads, while Piccini was merely appreciated, and "il [La Harpe] accordait la médiocrité, et ne pardonnait pas au génie."[242]

Mme de Genlis, too, considered both parties of men of letters involved in the Gluck-Piccini dispute as unworthy to be taken seriously, precisely because they had insufficient knowledge to issue judgements on musical matters.

> . . . je me moquai de toutes les disputes sur Gluck et Piccini des gens de lettres, qui ne savoient pas un mot de musique; ce qui me fit mes premiers ennemis dans la littérature, car j'étois dans la société une authorité en musique, et les littérateurs Gluckistes ne me pardonnoient pas, étant de mon parti, de me moquer d'eux; mais ils défendoient Gluck si ridiculement, que je ne les épargnois pas plus que les autres.[243]

In particular, Mme de Genlis was outraged by the Chevalier de Chastellux's criticism of Gluck's music. "Je m'afflige de voir le chevalier de Chastelux, qui n'a pas la moindre notion de musique, déclamer d'une manière si extravagante contre *Alceste* et *Iphigénie*, et soutenir que Gluck est un barbare" and opposed the anti-Gluckist stance of Chastellux by the authority of the marquis de Clermont, a "very good musician."[244] In her *Veillées du Château* (1782) Mme de Genlis made another allusion to her earlier criticism of Chevalier de Chastellux:

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[241] D'Abranatès, *Histoire des salons*, I, p. 371. Interestingly, Hector Berlioz also believed that it was the philosophes' lack of true musical knowledge which made them turn against Gluck's music: "O philosophers and prodigious fools! O old fogies and worthy men, who as people of intellect in a philosophical century wrote on musical art without the least feeling for it, without any elementary knowledge of it, without knowing what it means!" *Les Grotesques de la Musique*, as quoted by Romain Rolland, *Some musicians of former days*, pp. 255-256.

[242] D'Abrantès, *Histoire des salons*, I, p. 372.

[243] Mme de Genlis, *Mémoires*, III, p. 267.

[244] Mme de Genlis, *Souvenirs de Félicie L****, p. 71.

> C'est la mode aujourd'hui. Des personnes qui ne pourraient pas battre un air en mesure, qui ne sauraient pas distinguer dans un prélude un accord faux d'une dissonance, dissertent savamment sur la composition, et même font des ouvrages pour prouver que Piccini n'a point de talent, ou que Gluck est barbare.[245]

In reality, the Chevalier de Chastellux was not as ignorant in musical matters as Mme de Genlis presented him. Chastellux was the author of the *Essai sur l'union de la Poésie et de la Musique* (1765), expressing his preference for Italian music, and another work written in a similar vein, the *Observations sur un ouvrage intitulé Traité du mélodrama*, refuting the *Traité* by Laurent Garcin who opted for the priority of the text.[246] But scholastic speculation on the superiority of Italian over French music was apparently not what Mme de Genlis considered appropriate for an arbiter of taste. In fact, it was precisely the opposite of what she believed to be good taste. Theoretical speculations belonged to what polite society considered pedantic and savant and this was exactly why Mme de Genlis (a perfect representative of polite society) excluded Chastellux from the circle of legitimate arbiters of taste.

The eighteenth-century quarrels over the opera were male disputes. Neither party viewed women as having valid opinions as they were not, in general, considered able to make valid judgements—both due to their alleged inherent deficiencies and their lack of knowledge. Women could claim "authority" in artistic matters only through their identification with polite society (thus profiting from the traditional notion of artistic taste as a property of this society), rather than on the basis of either their individual connoisseurship (which was not recognized), or of the concept that women are "naturally" superior to a man in their ability to comprehend the arts (which was denied to them by the philosophes).

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[245] Mme de Genlis, *Les Solitaires de Normandie* in *Les Veillées du Château* (Paris: Lambert, 1782), II, p. 484.

[246] Other writers involved in the Gluck-Piccini dispute had some knowlege about music too. Abbé François Arnaud, for example, taught himself music while working at the library of the Trappists in Carpentras. In 1768-69 he and Suard published *Variétés littéraires*, in which he placed a couple of his articles on music. See Isherwood, "The Third War," p. 233.

The eighteenth-century quarrels over the French and the Italian opera reflected a growing rift between the salonnières and their guests, or, to an extent, between polite society and the public at large, over interrelated aesthetic, political, social and gender issues. The clash over the authority of judgement in aesthetic matters which reached its high point during the Gluck-Piccini controversy is probably the best indicator of that rift.

The operatic quarrels also exemplify the conservative stance of Parisian salonnières not only in aesthetic matters but in political and social as well. This conservative stance cannot be explained in the context of purely musical issues involved in the quarrels, as music never occupied any significant place in the most prominent salons in Paris. The pro-French position taken by the salonnières in the operatic quarrels was a part of their broader allegiance: to the principles involved in the conception of honnêteté. As opera in France was never a purely aesthetic matter but was closely linked with the monarchy and its politics, a position taken in the quarrels meant more than simply an aesthetic preference for one or the other operatic genre, especially in the case of persons occupying a prominent place in society life. This explains why Italian opera, while it was widely popular and listened to in Paris, was not officially supported to the point of replacing the ossified French repertoire of the Parisian Opéra of the late 1750s and 1760s. Instead, Gluck was invited and charged with the task of rejuvenating the French operatic genre along aesthetic lines established by its founding father, Lully, over a hundred years earlier. The French opera was a part of the state tradition to be perpetuated, not discarded. In supporting the French opera, the salonnières sided with the traditional and national musical ritual and confirmed their allegiance to the status quo.

# CONCLUSION

The establishment of the Parisian salon as a distinctive form of sociability around the mid-seventeenth century was a result of the convergence of three elements: the consolidation of the absolute monarchy after the Fronde, the shift in emphasis from the traditional noble values to honnêteté, and the perception of the vital role of women in disseminating these new values.

The relationship among these three elements was that of mutual advantage. Despite changing emphases within the content of honnêteté, reflecting changes in society and mores, its underlying purpose remained the same, that is, maintaining the status quo. The perceived role played by women in promoting honnête values opened for them a unique opportunity to function outside the strictly domestic sphere, traditionally the only one designated for women.

The very idea of allowing a woman to function outside the sphere of domesticity had nothing subversive about it, however, because the honnête values she was supposed to disseminate did not violate the traditional social roles designated for women. In fact, the opposite is true: by being made so important for sustaining honnêteté, women became advocates of their own limited role in society rather than of their advancement. The reason for this was the perception inherent in honnêteté as to the different social roles of both sexes, excluding women from some areas of life traditionally reserved for men, such as pursuing independent intellectual interests and acquiring formal knowledge, which could unbalance the established order of gendered roles. In other words, honnêteté as a coherent system of values was meant to prevent anarchy caused by transgression; rebellion against the rules inherent in honnêteté was interpreted as a rebellion against the status quo, as the example of the seventeenth-century précieuses shows. In the case of women, honnêteté was a more powerful repressive tool than in the case of men. In social practice it meant that a woman was expected to observe a distinctive set of bienséances considered appropriate for her sex and only on this ground could she build her reputation and expect the acceptance of society.

This very relatedness between women and feminine bienséances made a salon run by a woman possible. The salon became an accepted form of sociability only if a salonnière was ready to disseminate the rules of politeness and propriety. Women were rendered useful without violating men's sphere of activity. Moreover, salons functioned only as long as men agreed to come. Salons, then, reflected the expectation that men had of women and could exist only if these expectations were satisfied. Salons, such as that of the vicomtesse d'Auchy, where salonnières were primarily interested in pursuing their own interests, thus violating the rules of feminine bienséances, or predominantly feminine circles of the précieuses, were spotted, ridiculed, and remembered as examples of the illegitimate claims of these salonnières. For these same reasons, excessive restrictions imposed upon men by salon hostesses were not accepted in the long run, as the emergence of men's circles indicates.

This fear of social ostracism and ridicule and the emphasis on the bienséances (regardless of whether authentic or pretended) shaped eighteenth-century Parisian salons. The salon of Mme de Lambert, which set the tone for the rest of the century, was a return to the ideals of feminine bienséance epitomized by Mme de Rambouillet and a definite break with the aspirations of the seventeenth-century savantes and précieuses; an attempt to accommodate women's social aspirations and intellectual curiosity within the bienséances, not by breaking with them. Such designated boundaries of salon activities were kept in check by men and women alike, and are not to be seen as an example of feminine compliance with some sort of male pressure. After all, it was the Marquise de Rambouillet who belonged to the first critics of Mlle de Scudéry's literary pursuits when she wrote in one of her letters about the "griffonneuse Sapho." A century later, Mme Genlis, advocating that women should stay within the limits imposed by "tradition" simply continued the tradition of women criticizing the "excessive" aspirations of other women.

In their eulogies of Parisian salonnières, eighteenth-century authors indicated precisely what they valued most highly in these women: their readiness to recede into the background, rather than claims for equal participation with men in salon discussions; their ability to mediate, rather than push their own views. But the flattering contemporary opinions of salonnières contain a bitter truth: salonnières were accepted only as long as they limited themselves to tactful governing of their salons and making peace among quarreling parties; that is, as long as they played the roles of honnête femmes. If the salon represented a sphere in which women could play their roles based on the difference between sexes, this "difference" meant, in practice, acknowledging their (women's) "inherent" inability to do anything other than "governing" a salon. Self-denial and the reduction to formal roles were the cost of survival of the salon as an institution. And even playing precisely this limited role (or perhaps because of it) the salon became an object of severe criticism, as hampering the freedom of discourse. Salon women were accused of siding with conservative and reactionary forces in society.

Eighteenth-century criticism of feminine salons no longer focuses on transgressions of the bienséances by women (as this was rarely the case) but instead on their excessive attachment to them. The "politeness" promoted by salons and the emphasis on propriety (both of manners and of the content of salon conversations) are the primary targets, as epitomized by Rousseau's criticism; that is, the ideals that originally were expected from salons run by women. And as in the seventeenth century, so too in the eighteenth century, salons run by women were perceived as buttresses of absolutism and the status quo. In this respect, the critiques of salon society made by Rousseau and by Fénélon are strikingly similar (despite the different political allegiances of these authors): both advocate the model of the ancient republics of Rome and Sparta as an alternative to modern corruption, and both see salonnières as allies of the absolutist monarchical power.[1]

The pro-establishment stance with which salon women were commonly associated was as much stereotypical as it was real, as shown by their consistent support of the pro-French party in the eighteenth-century quarrels over the French and the Italian opera. Although commonly labelled "musical wars," these quarrels were not all about music but were a clash of two opposite orders of things: national and ultramontane, orderly and disorderly, noble and populist, dignified and trivial; and the choices between the two operatic styles were not merely choices of one aesthetic over another, but between these two conflicting orders of things. The positions taken in the operatic quarrels by the salonnières on the one hand, and the philosophes on the other, were indicative of a deep chasm that had always existed between them and was as inevitable as were the consequences of the specific

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[1] See Elena Russo, "'La science du monde': the double tradition of *honnêteté* in Marivaux and Crébillon," *Studies on Voltaire and the Eighteenth Century* 319 (1994), n.

"division" of gender roles in society relegating women to formal roles. Just as salonnières naturally took the pro-French stance, the philosophes were almost compelled to take the pro-Italian one.

Parisian salons and the court can hardly be seen as oppositional and salon women as attempting to challenge the authority of the French monarchy. Rather, the opposite is true. In contrast to Habermas's contention that the "public sphere" was not the offspring of any particular political system, salons (a part of what was then the "public sphere") were the offspring of the French monarchy and salon women identified themselves with what was perceived as *raison d'état* and never really seriously reiterated from this position.

The insight into the content of salon conversations shows that even if they represented a "public" opinion, this opinion was significantly different from the views of salon guests, the philosophes, and can hardly be interpreted as opposed to the court. Further, the deep disruption within the circle of the members of the Académie during the Gluck-Piccini quarrel in the 1770s shows the fragmentation of public opinion even more clearly. In the Querelle des Bouffons the literary profession was divided too. Using Robert Darnton's metaphor (although not its implications), while the literary mandarins were all for the Italian opera, the literary hacks were pro-French. In both quarrels the dominant genre of discours was a pamphlet, a *libelle*, not a salon conversation. These splits indicate the lack of any coherent "public" in eighteenth-century France. If anything, the massive "popular" support for the Gluck operas, associated with the monarchy and supported by the royalty, does nor argue for the existence of a public sphere whose majority was opposed to the court.

The departure from earlier ideas that allowed women to participate in intellectual activities on an equal footing with men and to comply with societal rules rather than break them did not ultimately help the salonnières avoid criticism and rejection by men. The relegation of women to the formal roles of guardians of manners and propriety, meant to ensure stability and order, made them impose restrictions in salons which led to tensions between the salonnières and their male guests and the emergence of exclusively male spheres of sociability. The salon became an artificial space, too far removed from the reality outside it. It became more and more difficult for salonnières to "accommodate" contemporary

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11, p. 133.

intellectual currents and the diverse opinions of their guests within the rules of politeness. The history of Parisian salons shows, in effect, the waning influence of the salonnières over things public. This development reaches its conclusion in the first decades of the nineteenth century. Salons remain primarily women's domain, but literary men cease coming to read their works there and having them judged by the salon women, nor do intellectuals come to discuss their own ideas in the setting offered by a salonnière. Significantly, the romantic *cénacles* of the early nineteenth century were exclusively male gatherings with almost no women admitted. The role of a salon hostess lost its symbolic meaning (however illusory it might have been in the past) and women hosting social gatherings were no longer exercising their traditional "leadership."

A present-day scholar has pointed out at "the central paradox of political culture under the Old Regime: a growing intensity in the real world of public political contestation coexisting with an idealized version of a conflict-free politics of rational consensus, grounded in enlightened public opinion."[2] If this model is correct, feminine salons exemplified the latter, idealized, conflict-free sphere, irreconcilable with the reality outside them. As the seventeenth-century salons typically attempted to "recreate the escapist world of the *romans de chevalerie* and the pastoral tradition inside the confines of their meeting places,"[3] so too did the eighteenth-century salonnières try to create an artificial space of perfect discourse, against the trends of the time.

The conception of honnêteté emerges as a key notion to conceptualize issues related to old regime sociability and gender relations. In pre-Revolutionary Parisian salons honnêteté triumphed over emotion and passion; order over disorder; classic over romantic; the national over the ultramontane; and things were kept under control even by such emotional salonnières as Julie de Lespinasse. The loyalty of salon women to that which was appropriate, moderate, and orderly was stronger than their loyalty to male rebels who, from the late 1770s, began establishing their own circles, independent of feminine salons.

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[2] Benjamin Nathans, "Habermas's 'Public Sphere' in the Era of the French Revolution," *French Historical Studies* 16/3 (Spring 1990), p. 640.

[3] Ian Maclean, *Woman Triumphant. Feminism in French Literature, 1610-1652* (Oxford at the Clarendon Press, 1977), p. 142.

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